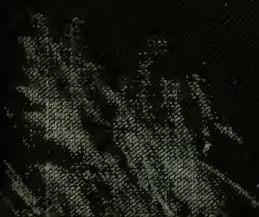
The Childhood of Jesus

ADOLPHE MONOD



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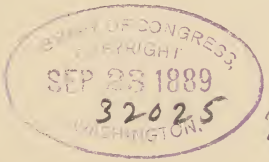
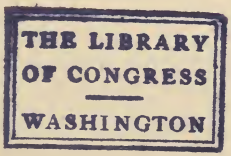
THE CHILDHOOD OF JESUS.

AND OTHER SERMONS.

By ADOLPHE MONOD.

Translated by Rev. J. H. MYERS.





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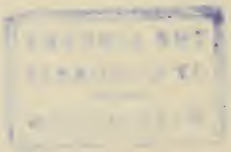

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INTRODUCTORY NOTE.

BY THE TRANSLATOR.

These sermons, by the most eminent French preacher of his day, are offered to the public in an English dress, from a strong conviction that their discussion of fundamental topics is, in a remarkable degree, both felicitous and instructive, and has special adaptations to the needs of our country and our times.

To Monod the highest place in sacred oratory has been conceded by the most competent judges. In speaking of the brilliant and solid fame acquired by the ablest pulpit orator and divine of Holland, Dr. Schaff compares him to Adolphe Monod, "when he stood at the head of the Protestant pulpit of Paris and of France." The late Abbé Lacordaire, unequaled in popularity as an orator among the Romish priests of France, remarked to his friends after hearing Monod: "We are all children in comparison."

Our own James W. Alexander, of rare erudition and accomplishment, knew Monod at Paris thirty years ago, in the ripe fullness of his fame and his usefulness, and described him as "the most remarkable mixture of sweetness and intense solemnity." Alluding to Monod's sermon, "God is Love," he observed, "It was an hour to be remembered for a life-time." And, after hearing the ablest men of the day in Great Britain, Dr. Alexander seems disposed to regard Adolphe Monod as the first among European preachers.

If there were occasion to justify such opinions, one need only refer to Monod's sermons on "The Living Word" (he delighted ever to extol and glorify our adorable Lord), "The Vocation of the Church," and "God Demanding the Heart of Man"; or to the two series published in this country twenty years since, one on "The Temptation of Christ," and the other (five sermons) on "Saint Paul."

In his writings judicious critics have recognized some of the highest qualities of the English and Continental pulpits in rare combination: a penetrating analysis and thorough discussion (as in the best American sermons) of the subjects handled; profound love to men and to

the Redeemer; simplicity with fervor of expression; together with that unstudied grace and finish of form which characterize the most illustrious French preachers.

Of the three discourses contained in this volume, addressed to the friends of education and to children, and delivered on successive anniversary celebrations in Paris, it is only just to say that, besides a deep knowledge of the human heart and the tender affection of the faithful Christian teacher, they evince a thoughtful appreciation of the nature of a true education and a cordial sympathy with childhood as well as adult age. The sermon on "The Childhood of Jesus; or, Christian Education," is often referred to, as by Lange and others; Canon Farrar, in his delightful Life of Christ, places it among his principal authorities.

The two sermons to children breathe a hopeful and cheerful tone with regard to the young; but they uphold also with great earnestness and force the ancient lesson of obedience to rightful authority, a lesson nowhere — not even in France itself — needing to be more pressed and urged home than in the domestic, social, and civil life of the American people at the present time.

The translator, while endeavoring to give a fitting form to this little book, has found it a pleasant task to prepare for the press other discourses by Monod, which will be published should a demand for them arise.

NOVEMBER, 1882.

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THE CHILDHOOD OF JESUS;

OR,

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION.

And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom: and the grace of God was upon him. Now his parents went to Jerusalem every year at the feast of the passover. And when he was twelve years old, they went up to Jerusalem after the custom of the feast. And when they had fulfilled the days, as they returned, the child Jesus tarried behind in Jerusalem; and Joseph and his mother knew not of it. But they, supposing him to have been in the company, went a day's journey; and they sought him among their kinsfolk and acquaintance. And when they found him not, they turned back again to Jerusalem, seeking him. And it came to pass, that after three days they found him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them, and asking them questions. And all that heard him were astonished at his understanding and answers. And when they saw him, they were amazed: and his mother said unto him, Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us? Behold, thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing. And he said unto them, How is it that ye sought me? wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business? And they understood not the saying which he spake unto them. And he went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject unto them: but his mother kept all these sayings in her heart. And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man. — LUKE 2: 40–52.

A PROFOUND mystery envelops the childhood of Jesus Christ. If it is always difficult to represent to one's self the Son of God "clothed with flesh like unto our sinful flesh," it is doubly so to think of him as a child growing in body and mind like another child. In this gradual development, what part pertains to the Son of man, what part to the Son of God? At what time, on what occasion, in what manner, did there begin in Jesus the consciousness of his divine nature and of his heavenly mission? Questions as perplexing as they are delicate, the solution of which can not be looked for, at least in our present state of being. Adoring in silence the holy obscurity of those "secret things [which] belong unto the Lord our God," we here humbly confine ourselves to the practical application of those "revealed things" which "belong unto us and our children." I desire in the child

Jesus to seek out the principles which should preside over Christian education. In every enterprise, the means to be adopted are determined by the end had in view. You can in no way, then, better ascertain how you ought to train up your children than by representing to your minds that which they ought to become; nor can you in any way better understand what they ought to become than by studying *the life of the child Jesus.* Such is the purpose of the meditation on which I now enter; it corresponds to the task which has been assigned me for the day, the encouragement of *primary education.* Is it less in correspondence with a want of your own hearts, with a general need of society, and with a special need of this generation which is tempest-tossed continually, but only the more inexorably bound to the unchangeable obligations of domestic life? In order to cast anchor in the State, and even in the Church, one must know, at

certain epochs, how to wait; it is the sacred privilege of the family never to wait.

When the interest of the subject which occupies us is comprehended, and when it is felt with the heart of a father or a mother, one can not escape from a painful surprise on opening the first chapters of the Gospels and vainly searching page after page for details respecting the childhood of our Lord, upon which it would be so profitable, it seems to us, to meditate and to cause our children to meditate. One could wish to shake the book, that from it there might drop some additional narratives of those thirty years spent at Nazareth, and to which Saint Luke, the only one of the evangelists who speaks of them, devotes but twelve verses. With what care would a human book have shunned a like omission! Among the false gospels (known under the name of Apocryphal Gospels) which

appeared in the first ages of the Church was a gospel of the childhood of our Saviour, lavish in details concerning the child Jesus; but these details were not authenticated: they were frequently trivial or puerile and in fact such as might be expected upon such a subject from the imagination of man, supplementing the silence of the Holy Spirit. Let us recognize God's Word by this sobriety which perplexes us; and let us be well assured that in telling us only a few things concerning the child Jesus, it has told all that it was good for us to know; nothing more, but also nothing less — not one word conceded to our curiosity, but not one withheld from that "pure heart" which "hungers and thirsts after righteousness." Precisely as it is, the narrative of the childhood of our Lord furnishes us with more than one salutary counsel with regard to the education of our children. This will be made evident by the lessons

which we shall presently gather from the narrative, and which are far from exhausting it.

But before engaging in this examination let us pause for a moment to consider a previous lesson that is conveyed to us by the very silence of Scripture. If it passes so rapidly over thirty years in the life of our Lord though filling four Gospels with the few years that followed, it is doubtless for the reason that there was much less to say concerning the one portion than concerning the other. It is because there was nothing in the childhood of the Lord, or even in his youth, of that luster which shone out subsequently in his authoritative teachings, in the virtue of his miracles and in the progress of his brief but astonishing history. That luster is attributed by the Apocryphal Gospel of which I have just spoken, to his childhood, which is there depicted all glowing with prodigies and as if encircled by a

halo of glory; for the simple narrative of the gospel it substitutes a legend, not to say a fairy story. And this is quite natural in the order of human ideas. Pagan antiquity has exhibited Hercules preluding his future greatness by stifling two serpents in his cradle, and why should not He who was soon to heal the sick by the mere touch of his garment begin his miracles while hanging on his mother's breast? But "God's thoughts are not our thoughts;" and such a prelude to the miracles of Jesus is absolutely wanting in the evangelical narrative. Let us learn from this that, contrary to human preconceptions, Jesus when a child belonged to his own age. "To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven."

This divine rule which should regulate all human affairs presided over the life of Jesus. In him nothing was found which was not in its place and in its true rela-

tions; there was no lack of harmony or of equilibrium between the different phases of his being; to his maturity pertained the task of that maturity; to his childhood the cares of childhood, and perhaps its pastimes, its sports, and its tears. The child Jesus was a child; a child like other children, in whom nothing, either in his deportment, his words, or his works, clearly disclosed to others his future mission — perhaps, as yet, nothing disclosed it to himself. He was a child who was distinguished among his companions only by the simple and silent fulfillment of the duties of his age, while engaged in the occupations pertaining to his age.

A great lesson this with respect to education. Let our children, also, belong to their age. Let us take heed lest an impatient cultivation of their faculties cause them to anticipate the development that comes with years and thus disturb God's

order. The mature man who has not learnt to "put away childish things" presents a humiliating spectacle; but it is also an instance of lamentable irregularity, although it may be an object of ambition to more than one father or mother, when we see a child who copies manhood in his actions and in his language, and who aspires to overleap at a bound the steps which God has placed in his pathway, instead of climbing them one by one. Those steps are healthful; life is not discounted with impunity. They are healthful for the body, which would suffer by a development, premature and disproportionate, of the intellect. They are healthful for the mind, which, like the body, has need to strengthen as it grows, and is enfeebled by a too rapid growth. But they are healthful above all for the soul, which we ought jealously to maintain in that tender simplicity so loved by the Saviour himself, and which is indeed a

delightful ornament of childhood, a flower which easily fades, and which once faded never regains its original hues. A precocious and brilliant child, quoted everywhere for a mind above his years, is a sorrowful sight; sad for others, but especially sad for himself. Above his age, do you say with pride? So much the worse. Better that he should be of his age, as was the child Jesus, for his age is God's time in regard to him. Ah! let not our children cause themselves to be spoken of; let there be silence observed concerning their childhood, as the gospel keeps silence concerning the childhood of Him who was the model child; let them not be taught to think themselves to be something and to set themselves up as a spectacle to men! Let them grow in the shade, in the sanctuary of the family, happily unknown to the world, beneath the eye of the Lord and for his glory! And may they be enabled, like the child whom Jesus set one day in

the midst of his apostles, to serve the Lord for text and example, showing us the spirit of humility in which we ought to serve God and receive his word!

Let us seek now in the recital of our evangelist the characteristic traits by which the child Jesus is therein commended as an example to children; and let us gather from it the spirit in which we ought to guide our own children.

Look first at this picture of his early childhood, before he had reached the age of twelve years. "And the little [1] child grew and waxed strong in spirit, being filled with wisdom: and the grace of God was upon him." In the beginning of this verse, we see the child Jesus developing in body and in mind; and the language of the evangelist, the same which is used

[1] "Little child," in the French; the Greek word thus rendered is in our version translated "young child" eight times in Matthew ii, where the babe Jesus is spoken of; the same word, in the same relation, occurs in Luke 2: 21, 27, and is there rendered "child," in the received English Version. — TR.

in speaking of the childhood of John the Baptist, has no peculiarity that need detain us here; but the sequel casts a pleasing light upon the character of the divine child.

He was "filled with wisdom: and the grace of God was upon him." The wisdom referred to in the passage is not the wisdom which is according to this world, but the wisdom which is according to God. It was neither that proud philosophy which Greece boasted and which she was wont to teach so sedulously to the rising generation;[1] nor those prudential maxims of life in which the children of the age surpass the children of light;[2] nor that learning drawn from books which studious men amass with so much toil;[3] nor even the speculative knowledge of God and of the holy mysteries of his word.[4] It is that wisdom so often

[1] 1 Cor. 1: 22; 3: 18–20; Col. 2: 8.
[2] Luke 16: 8.
[3] Eccles. 12: 12.
[4] 1 Cor. 13: 2.

praised in the books of king Solomon, the first lesson of which is: "Fear God and keep his commandments;" and which Job defines in these terms at the end of a wonderful discourse in which he contrasts it with the knowledge and the diligence of this world: "The fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding."[1] It is the wisdom of piety which puts each thing in its place, and which, recognizing the supremacy of the Creator over the creature, and of eternity over time, fastens upon "the one thing needful," and "seeks first the kingdom of God and his righteousness."

Behold here the humble wisdom with which the child Jesus was animated, with which he was "filled," like a vase full of a precious liquid which pours over the sides, and as we ought to be "filled with the Holy Spirit,"[2] even with "all the fulness of God."[3] Try to bring before

[1] Job 28: 28.
[2] Eph. 5: 18.
[3] Eph. 3: 19.

your minds a young child, walking in the fear of God, praying to him with all his heart, serving him even in the least things, seeking out occasions to commune with him; what other sight could so rest the heart and delight the eye! Such was Jesus; in his childhood you would have found the ideal of this picture, heightened by a perfect simplicity. Walking thus "with God," "the grace of God was upon him," pursues the evangelist; the favor of God rested upon that child-like and holy head. God already took delight in this child, to whom he was afterwards to give this testimony from heaven, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased;" [1] and whose mere presence in the midst of men had caused him to proclaim at the birth of Jesus: "Good-will towards men." Thus the piety of the child Jesus toward God, and the favor of God toward the child Jesus,

[1] Matt. 3: 17.

constitute the characteristic feature, the only feature, to which Saint Luke refers in depicting that childhood which was appointed to serve for an example to all generations. Was there found in the child Jesus superior knowledge, remarkable aptitude, extraordinary genius? That is possible, but that is not declared to us; all that we know is, that he was a pious child, loving God, loved by God.

Let us open our ears and our hearts, Christian parents. Behold here the instruction of instructions, the fundamental principle which should be placed at the basis of education, and which can not be wanting without carrying away every thing with it. The wisdom that is according to God, or the favor of God, that is to say, piety, a piety that is true, simple, living, active, this is the first grace which we ought to ask and seek for our children. The first, I say, and not the only one. We must assuredly place our chil-

dren in a condition to "gain their bread by the sweat of their brow." Jesus Christ doubtless was not unacquainted with labor in his childhood, and according to a tradition which seems to be confirmed by Scripture,[1] he took part, until the day of his manifestation unto Israel, in the humble occupation of him whom he styled his father. We must also cultivate the understandings of our children, exercise their judgments, enrich their minds with useful knowledge, not only in order to their personal advantage, but furthermore to enable them to serve God and man. There is no evidence that this was not done for the child Jesus, according to the rank, the needs, and the resources of his modest family. All this is right in the sight of God. Happy, then, are the parents who, in these several particulars, fulfill the difficult duties of education; happy, provided that they apply them-

[1] He was called "the carpenter." Mark 6 : 3.

selves with still greater zeal to nurture their children in the fear of God, and to draw down upon them his blessing. "These things ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone." Learning, talent, industry, are to be valued highly; but their place is after piety, and at a very great distance from piety; no genius, no enlightenment on the part of our children, is worthy to be compared with a holy life, a just and scrupulous conscience, and a heart that delights in prayer.

But when these maxims are embraced, is it not to be feared that the education which relates to the present life will be neglected, and that there will be raised up a generation more fitted for heaven than for earth, very inadequately prepared for the service of society, or even for the management of a family? No, my brethren, do not think it. Here, as every-where, will be verified that profound

saying of our Lord, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you." For the child, as for the full-grown man, "Godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come." It fortifies the will, it fructifies toil, it multiplies time, it removes obstacles, it augments resources, it emancipates the mind, it develops the understanding, it sharpens the faculties. A child who fears God will be, all other things being equal, more inclined than other children to meditation, to study, to industry, to "whatsoever things are good and praiseworthy before God and man;" the inner history of families and of schools would testify to this abundantly. However this may be, let us give the first place to God, because it belongs to him; let us give it to him sincerely, cordially, invariably; and God, "faithful towards those who

are faithful," will assuredly bring it to pass that for this we shall exercise no repentance "either in this world or in that which is to come."

Let, then, the love of God be the soul of education in our homes, and let his Word be its center. Let this Word, read, meditated, invoked in our intercourse, exert a sovereign authority in our houses, and from us let our children learn, better than we have learned, to verify that promise of the Holy Spirit, "Blessed is the man . . . [whose] delight is in the law of the Lord; and in his law doth he meditate day and night." A mother of a family, though married to an irreligious man who mocked at religion before his own family, nevertheless succeeded in training them all up in the fear of the Lord. I inquired of her one day privately how she had been able to withdraw them from the influence of a father whose sentiments were so openly opposed to her own.

This was her reply: "It is because I did not confront the authority of a father with that of a mother, but with the authority of God. From their tenderest years my children have always seen the Bible on my table. This holy book was the source of all their religious teaching; I kept silence to let it speak. Did they ask me a question? Did they fall into some error? Did they perform a good action? I opened the Bible, and it was that which replied to them; it reproved them, it encouraged them. The constant reading of the Scriptures has alone wrought the prodigy that astonishes you."

And we fathers and mothers, are we faithful; do we maintain a consistent course? Have we courage enough, faith enough, humility enough, to reserve for God and his Word, that dominant and unshared position accorded them by the mother of whom I have just spoken? Would we be satisfied for our children

with that praise with which the Holy Spirit is content in respect to Jesus Christ: "And the little child grew and waxed strong in spirit, being filled with wisdom; and the grace of God was upon him." Do we not suffer ourselves to be led away by the spirit of the age? Do we not labor with more zeal to render our children well instructed, accomplished, distinguished, than to make them good, pious, and holy? Let us fear to see them so learned, so accomplished, and so distinguished that they would blush to place themselves by the side of the child of Nazareth, in the obscure workshop of Joseph the carpenter. May God preserve our children from "the pollutions of this world!" Above all, may he preserve them from being plunged therein by our hands!

At the close of the narrative given in our text, and as a pendant to the picture drawn by Saint Luke, in a single verse, of the *first* years of the childhood of Jesus,

we find a representation of the *latter* portion of his childhood and even of his youth, which occupies scarcely more space. This follows the scene in the temple: "And he went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject unto them: but his mother kept all these sayings in her heart. And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man." These last words, which recall to mind the testimony borne in the Old Testament to the childhood of Samuel, "The child Samuel grew on, and was in favour both with the Lord, and also with men,"[1] offer a striking resemblance to the fortieth verse in which the early childhood of Jesus is set before us. We are here informed that the moral qualities which we admired in this child continued to increase with his years, as well as the favor which by means of them he found with God and with men.

[1] 1 Sam. 2: 26.

The same spirit which presided over the childhood of Jesus still presides over his youth; it is unfolded year by year; and to this fair ideal may be applied in an altogether special sense the beautiful image in Proverbs: "The path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day."

But in the next to the last verse of our text there occurs one word which demands our closest attention: "And he was *subject* unto them."

After the scene which had just passed in the temple, and after the vague impression of his heavenly calling which Jesus had now given to the world, and especially to his parents (verses 50, 51), it might readily be supposed that the nature of his relations to them would be henceforth modified by the consciousness of his superiority. Such would be the judgment of human wisdom; but here again human wisdom is at fault.

Jesus, who had never for a moment seemed to turn aside from the tender respect which he was wont to show to his parents except to obey a call from on high, returns immediately afterward to his former obscurity and obedience, and manifests a submission yet more complete. How wonderful is this characteristic! How remarkably so in this connection! And what discourse, what arguments, could so powerfully express the obedience which children owe to their fathers! If the only and well-beloved Son of God was submissive; if he in whom was found no sin was submissive; if he who was in the beginning with God and was God was submissive, — what child, what young man, what young woman, can refuse to be submissive to father or mother? Children, young men, young girls, whose desire it is to be like Jesus, know assuredly that next to the duty which you owe to God, you have no more sacred obliga-

tion in the world, you have no means more certain to draw upon you the favor of God and of men, than to obey your parents. "Children," says the Apostle Paul, "obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right." [1] Right before God; right before men; right before your own conscience. Also, continues the holy apostle, this commandment, "Honour thy father and thy mother," is the "first;" and moreover, it is "with promise; that it may be well with thee, and that thou mayest live long on the earth;" [2] as if God had designed to

[1] Eph. 6: 1.

[2] The meaning is that this is the first commandment, and that, furthermore, it is accompanied by a promise. Saint Paul styles it the first, because he is referring here only to the second table of the law, which comprises the duties which we owe to our neighbor; a like reference he appears to make also in Rom. 13: 9, 10. It is common to explain the thought of the apostle in another manner. It is supposed that he means to say that the commandment which he has just named is the one, among the Ten Commandments, which is first of all accompanied by a promise. But this interpretation presents two difficulties: in the first place, one of the preceding commandments, namely, the second, is accompanied by a promise; and, secondly, not one of the commandments following this has a promise attached. If this be the first commandment accompanied by a promise, where is the second?

distinguish this commandment and lift it above all the others.

But I am wandering from my subject. To-day I am not addressing myself to children, but to you, fathers and mothers. This, then, is the new lesson herein given to you: bring up your children in obedience. Obedience is the soul, the life, the salvation of education. Your children do not possess sufficient experience to understand the full force of that argument of the apostle, "For this is right." This is the order established by God, and the maintenance of this order is the safeguard of all other order, divine or human. Undeniably this rule of education pertains to all times and generations; neither the example of the child Jesus nor the law of God, as contained alike in the Old Testament and in the New, nor the moral code among all nations, can possibly leave any doubt on this point. Did time permit I should cite, in confirmation

of this, numerous maxims derived from the Proverbs, a book so original, so instructive, and so salutary in every part for the mind that becomes imbued with its teachings. But let us go no further than to consider how this general rule is heightened in importance by the existing state of society, and more especially in our own country.

My brethren, all men who reflect are affrighted by the ravages caused in our modern world by the spirit of insubordination. This spirit, which indeed is found in all ages because it is nourished by the two passions which are most deeply rooted in the natural heart, selfishness and pride, has in our day attained to a development so little known hitherto that it may without injustice be styled one of the distinctive features of our times. Insubordination in the State, insubordination in the Church, insubordination every-where. We ask ourselves to what extent will this

evil grow, and to what extremes it may lead; and we, more than all others, have reason to ask this, we who are now gathering from it, who have gathered from it, and, I will add, may in the future still gather from it, such bitter fruits! This evil of such vast magnitude and the more difficult to cure because it is one of those evils which paralyze in advance the efficacy of the remedies employed, — upon whom can reliance be placed to arrest it or resist it? Upon the State? The State has grave duties to fulfill in this regard; but the State, as the State, being almost fatally compelled to put force in place of authority, and to rely upon fear instead of respect and affection, finds itself evermore in the terrible alternative of either leaving the spirit of insubordination without check, or of incurring the danger of provoking it by the very precautions which are adopted for its repression. Shall we rely upon the Church to arrest this evil? That would

assuredly be a task worthy of her; but, alas! the Church has been so tossed to and fro, and is now so engaged in the work of reëstablishing order within herself that she could not expect that deference or that attention from men at this day which she would need in order to accomplish so great and difficult an enterprise. If there is one institution whose aid might be hoped for in such an undertaking, it is the family. More than one cause, doubtless, has originated the evil which we deplore; but its principal cause, its root, is in the enfeeblement of parental authority. Whoever has been taught in childhood to honor his father and mother will have learnt to carry at a later day the same submissive spirit into other relations of life, and, according to God's command, to obey princes and magistrates, to respect those who rule over the church, and to "submit to every ordinance of man."[1] But, save by divine

[1] 1 Peter 2: 13; Heb. 13: 17.

grace, how shall one acquire the habit of obedience who has not been fashioned to it in the family, which is at once the cradle and the school of society? That insubordination which we deplore in Church and State is but the natural result, the inevitable development of the insubordination which exists in the family, the full extent and the full gravity of which are inadequately apprehended.

Look around you; survey all classes of society. Go into the cottage of the poor; what do you find there but sons who think themselves more knowing than their father, who raise their voices above his voice, who dispute, who grow angry, who fly into a rage, and who fail to resist authority by physical force only for the reason perhaps that their years as yet deny them the strength which time will quickly bring? Enter next the house of the rich man; there you will find the same disorder, only that it is clothed in

forms a little less gross. You will find there young people, children, who usurp the first place in the house, who boldly take the lead in conversation, who, as if experts in all knowledge, pronounce upon the most difficult questions in literature, politics, philosophy, or religion. Where are the well-ordered households, in which are found the empire of authority, the silence of submission, and all the saintly hierarchy of virtues consecrated by the Word of God?

Christian parents, and you more especially who are heads of families, it is with you, it is in the family, it is in the cradle, that the social regeneration must commence, the need of which is felt by you all. The authority of parents, an authority stationed as it were at the very gate of society, is at once the mightiest and the gentlest that exists in the world. Well administered, it hardly knows impossibilities. It need only be used in a

Christian manner to succeed, with the blessing of God, — which will surely be given to your pious efforts, — in inspiring your children with a spirit of prompt, complete, and constant obedience, and, if occasion demand it, in enforcing upon them such obedience. In that case, but only then, you will have been faithful. Take heed not to jest with a profane and trifling world concerning the weakness of fathers in regard to their children; remember that there can be no more serious subject. What the world calls spoiling children is in the sight of God committing a grievous sin against their souls, against the good order of society, and against the authority of God himself. Carefully avoid not only that gross kind of indulgence which would lead you to yield to their caprices and their cries, but also that more subtle complaisance which suffers them insensibly to usurp an influence in the household which is opposed to

the interests of all its members and especially to their own. Let the child keep himself in his place, which is a place of respectfulness, of silence, of humility, and, above all, of obedience. Alas! how much easier is it to say this than to do it! What father of a family will not penitently smite upon his breast while comparing his conduct in this respect with his duty, in these days when one can not conform to the law of God except by withdrawing his household and himself, first of all, from that wide-spread corruption which has alike perverted the thoughts and misdirected the acts of men? Heavenly Father, lead us by thy Spirit, form us anew after thine image, and teach us how to blend, in the education of our children, as thou dost in the training of thine own, firmness of command with fervor of love!

There remains to be considered the principal scene of my text. Jesus had

now reached the age of twelve years; a critical age in which childhood gives place to youth, and which the narrative in our text appears to commend to our attention as an important and decisive epoch, when parents may hope, and ought to strive, to see their children entering upon a personal knowledge and confession of the Lord. This was the age at which a Jewish child was accustomed to take the name of "a son of the covenant," and when he began to accompany his parents in the pilgrimages which they made to Jerusalem three times every year, in order to be present upon the solemn festivals. Jesus, then, goes up to Jerusalem and to the temple for the first time (in all probability) since he had been presented in the temple when forty days old, at the purification of his mother.

That which Jesus chiefly regards in his journey to Jerusalem is the opportu-

nity thus afforded him of hearing those doctors who "held the key of knowledge," and who, "sitting in the seat of Moses," instructed the people in the law of God. He finds them in the temple, and he pauses in the midst of them, listening to them, questioning them, and answering their questions. Observe him well. He listens, he questions, he replies, but *he does not teach.* He will teach at a later day, when years shall have passed and the right time shall have come; he will confound these same doctors to whom he listens eagerly to-day; but to-day, while still a child, he does nothing that is at all opposed to the peculiar character of childhood. These doctors have been set apart to give instruction in the law, by the appointment of God and through the respect of the people; and it is in conforming himself to this order of things, which proceeds both from God and from man, that the child Jesus

awaits the blessing of the Father. He looks not at the doctors but to that God in whose name the doctors speak; and in this same spirit he will subsequently exhort his disciples to observe that which the doctors bid them do, but at the same time not to imitate their works.[1]

"And all that heard him were astonished at his understanding[2] and answers." By *wisdom* we make choice of God, of his service, and of his Word, as of the one thing needful; by *understanding* we penetrate into the knowledge of God, we discern his will, we comprehend his Word. Such is the understanding that is shown in the questions and the answers of the child Jesus, and which astonishes all those who hear him. How beautiful was it, in truth, and how touching to see a child of twelve years reserv-

[1] Matt. 23: 3.

[2] This is the exact translation of the word which our versions have rendered by *wisdom*. (Our English Version gives the exact rendering as above, "*understanding*." — TR.)

ing the lovely ardor of his youth for the service of God; eager to be taught his Word, and having already made such progress therein that he instructs and edifies those whom he came to question with a child's simplicity; thus verifying in all its fullness that declaration of Psalm 119 (vs. 99, 100): "I have more understanding than all my teachers; I understand more than the ancients."

But the true spirit of the child Jesus, and the chief lesson which this history gives us with regard to Christian education, is disclosed in the reply which Jesus makes to his mother when she tells him of the trouble which he had caused both her and his father: "How is it that ye sought me? Did ye not know that I must be about my Father's business?" Deducting that special portion of this answer which was adapted only to the divine child, elevated by his nature and his work above terrestrial relationships

and affections, we find here the expression of a thought suited to all children and which ought to preside over all education; and that is the thought that God and the work he has given us to do must have precedence over all besides. In this language we recognize him who was to say, at a later day, when driving the money-changers out of the temple, "The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up;" and, on another occasion, forgetting the care of his body in order to proclaim the kingdom of God, "My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work;" and, while praying for the last time with his disciples, "I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do."

Christian parents, it is here that we penetrate into the heart of our subject. Let us not turn away our eyes from the solemn lesson which God gives us through this child, even should we, like his mother, find in it "a sword which shall pierce our

own souls." Do you wish that your children should be such as the child Jesus showed himself to be on that momentous occasion? Do you wish that they, like you and better than you, should participate in the feasts and ordinances of the Lord? Secure for them the formation of religious habits, in the church and especially in the family. But that is not the chief point at which you should aim. Do you wish them to be capable, by their rapid advancement in wisdom and in spiritual knowledge, to astonish those who hear them, and at twelve years of age to surpass the ancient doctors? What then? Place in their hands the Word of God, since to it alone does it pertain to effect this amazing prodigy. But neither is that the chief point to be aimed at. Behold it here! You wish — *do* you wish? — that they should be so firmly resolved to fulfill the work which their heavenly Father has given them to do, that, if the day comes

when they can do it only on condition of becoming separated from you and inflicting on you severe distress, they shall not hesitate on account of the separation and the distress. Strengthen them, therefore, against themselves and against you, by your discourse and by your example. Nurture them in the thought that in their esteem God must be above all others, even above you; and show your children that in *your* esteem God is put above all others, even above them.

Your children, before they belong to you, belong to God. Because they are not his in that special and supernatural sense which is peculiar to the Son of Mary, they do not the less truly belong to him, who has entrusted them to you expressly that they may be trained up for his service, saying to you, as formerly the daughter of Pharaoh said to the mother of Moses: "Take this child away, and nurse it for me." Not to respond to such an

appeal would be an act of unfaithfulness, and the greatest of all such acts on account of the infinite value of the deposit. What would the mismanagement of a fortune be in comparison with the mismanagement of an immortal and accountable soul? But for this accountable and immortal soul, just as truly as for Jesus Christ when a child, God has in view not only the general obligation to glorify him, but also a special work in which that soul is bound to glorify him, and in reference to which all has been provided and regulated beforehand — all resources, aptitudes, and circumstances. In that direction all paths are opened for your child, who will see his way made ready before him, day by day, by the hand of God, as it was in the life of Jesus; but he will not be able to labor in any other direction without failing to fulfill his vocation and disturbing the entire order of his existence, just as Jesus would have done

when be became a man if — to state an impossible hypothesis — he had devoted his human life and his celestial gifts to some other object than the redemption of mankind.

To be a father or a mother is to be a "co-worker with God" in the care of souls, with the combined resources of a tenderness, an influence, and an authority equaled by nothing else on earth. Fathers and mothers, be faithful. Understand your task better than Joseph and Mary apprehended theirs at that solemn festival; and when understood, fulfill it by setting before your children an example of self-renunciation and of seeking God alone. God wills, and Abraham lifts his obedient hand against his only and well-beloved son; God wills, and Isaac, without resistance and without a murmur, bids farewell to his father and to life. Be that Abraham; train your child to become like Isaac. Apply your mind, with the child,

to discern the work to which God calls him; examine his gifts, interrogate events and the leadings of a paternal providence; seek and you shall find, if so be that you put far from you every thing, your own will, worldly honor, fortune and interest, in order to take heed to one point alone, the will of God and the calling of God.

I do but lay down the principle; I leave with you the applications of that principle. The work of God which is reserved for your children may be of infinitely diversified kinds. And yet there is one work which I wish to name, because it has a special connection with that of Jesus; I mean that work which has for its object the evangelization of the world, and which Jesus himself commends especially to our attention and to our prayers: "The harvest truly is great, but the labourers are few; pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth labourers into his harvest." What is the great evil

of which complaint is now made in all directions? It is the want of laborers. Resources are feeble, it is true; but the failure is not so much there as with regard to laborers; and whenever well-qualified laborers have been found for any work of evangelization, I have never perceived that money was wanting; we might as well say that it was wanting to the Lord of heaven and earth. But good laborers are needed every-where; it is the common cry. The heathen world, thrown open before us, calls loudly for missionaries, but they are sought for in vain; they are not found. Out of more than a million of French Protestants, hardly two or three in the course of a year present themselves in response to our reiterated appeals; and of these two or three hardly one remains, after careful trial, who can be sent forth with confidence. Pastors, good pastors for our churches, are not less difficult to

discover; a recent enumeration showed a large number of posts still unoccupied. Nearer your homes, in Paris, perhaps in your own quarter of the city, fifty families ask to be visited; schools are ready to be opened; funds are at hand, or will be when needed; but the evangelists, the instructors, male and female, are not to be found. Those for whom the work of evangelization would be a career of self-denial, the children of rich families or of those in easy circumstances, do not enter upon it; the few who undertake such labor nearly all belong to the lower classes of society, from which our ranks are too exclusively recruited. Thus faithful pastors, well-furnished preachers, skillful directors, zealous evangelists, active colporters, capable teachers, are rare treasures, easier to be enumerated than to be increased.

And your sons and your daughters, what are they doing? for whom are you

training them up? Is not the work of the Lord Jesus worthy of them? Will you not at least examine and see if their rightful place be not among those laborers whom you are asking the Lord of the harvest to send forth, whilst he is asking you for them perhaps, and you are refusing them to him? Where are those faithful Monicas[1] who have but one favor to ask for their sons, that they may be permitted to serve the Lord, even though they should be forever far separated from their tender mothers? An easier task, perhaps, than to find the Monicas, it would be to name such and such a father who, when urged by his son to suffer him to be enrolled in the soldiery of Jesus Christ, has obstinately resisted, and has preferred, at the prompting of a selfish and carnal affection, to devote his son to a career to

[1] Monica, mother of the illustrious church teacher, Augustine. Her soul yearned for her son's conversion and for his consecration to God, in the midst of the impieties of his early youth. — TR.

which God has not called him, and to deliver him up, it may be, to all the vanities and lusts of the world. Oh, that fathers and mothers were faithful! That fashion were not queen of the world, and money were not its king! Oh, that children were received as from the hand of God, to be consecrated to God! What a blessing would then result to families, and what a blessing to the Church! How many exemplary pastors, how many powerful preachers, how many skillful teachers, how many active evangelists, would then be found to meet every demand and every need! Without leaving this church how many might be found in this audience, and how much good could be done to the world by the children here assembled! Fathers and mothers, be faithful! Far from sorrowing that your sons or your daughters should be "about their Father's business," press them into it yourselves. Train them up for God, give them back

to God, and leave them with God to work his will. Such is the secret of Christian education.

Does this education seem to you a very solemn thing? But have you lost sight of the truth that all that is Christian is of Christ, and that all that is of Christ partakes of the cross? The child who has just now been teaching us for our children will teach us also for ourselves. We read in our Gospels that Jesus took a little child one day and placed him in the midst of his disciples and said unto them: "Become like this little child." Something like this I am doing to-day. In thought I place a child in the midst of you, saying to you, "Become like this child;" and this child is Jesus himself. He grows up in the shade; he becomes strong by degrees; he increases in favor with God and with men; he interests and touches even the doctors of the law. But look up toward the horizon; for whom is

that cross rising? For the holy child, who shall save the world; for him first, and then for all those who desire to follow him, in proportion to the good which they will to do and the resources for its accomplishment which God has entrusted to them.

Be of good courage then, ye fathers and mothers! Go forward, in faith! There is no Son of God without his cross; no Isaac without his altar; no Mary without the sword that pierces her soul; no spiritual birth without rending and anguish; but to-morrow the Son of God will have risen, Isaac will be unbound, Mary comforted, and all your sacrifices will be forgotten in the supreme joy of being enabled to say to your God and the God of your children, "Here am I and the children whom God hath given me!" Amen.

THE CHILD AT THE PASSOVER

THE CHILD AT THE PASSOVER.

MY dear children, at your age one loves to travel; what say you, then, to a long and beautiful journey? You are in Paris, in the year 1851; betake yourselves in thought to Judæa, at the period of which Saint Luke is speaking, precisely eighteen hundred and fifty years ago. As to the time of year, there is nothing to be changed; we are at the end of the month of March, which corresponds to the middle of the Jewish month of Nisan; and this is just as we would have it. Only, Judæa being eighteen degrees, that is to say 1,250 miles, nearer than we to the

equator (your teachers will explain that to you), the season is there more advanced than with us. It is the most beautiful part of the year in one of the finest countries of the earth; to-day the Turks have changed it so greatly that it can not be recognized as the same; but I am speaking of Judæa as it was formerly. We are now in that pleasant temperature of spring, when it is no longer cold and it is not yet warm. At the utmost, the heat is a little uncomfortable in the plains of Jericho and on the shores of that frightful Dead Sea, near which every thing is dead. Elsewhere it is agreeably tempered: in the interior, by the elevation of the land, the whole country being like a long, low mountain range; and along the coast there is a refreshing breeze which blows from the sea morning and evening, and which is called by Moses "the wind of the day."[1] The

[1] Gen. 3: 8. (See margin of English Version. — TR.)

rains, storms,[1] and inundations have ceased. The river Jordan, after having during several weeks overflowed its banks and deposited a fertilizing slime,[2] has just fallen back quietly into its confined and narrow bed, to the great delight of the husbandman, who was beginning to fear lest his lands might be soaked so thoroughly as to be carried away, and who was eager, also, to be freed from the foray of the lion, driven from his lair by the swelling of Jordan.[3] It is already several weeks since the trees began to put forth their leaves, and the almond tree its flowers, compared by Solomon to the white hairs of an aged man.[4] The apricot, the peach, and the plum are almost ripe, and the first ears of corn are falling beneath the scythe of the reaper, whom the passers-by salute in these words, "The Lord be with thee!" and

[1] These, in Judæa, occur ordinarily only in the winter. (1 Sam. 12: 16-18.)

[2] Josh. 3: 15.

[3] Jer. 49: 19; 50: 44.

[4] Eccles. 12: 5.

who replies thus to their salutation: "The Lord bless you!"[1]

God has so well arranged events, my dear children, that the happiest time of year for the soil agrees exactly with the time in which God delivered his people "out of the land of Egypt and out of the house of bondage." We are at the beginning of the harvest; we are also at the feast of the passover, the most important of the three great festivals. Do you see here and there, scattered over the country, those clouds of travelers coming from all parts of Judæa, who are going up to Jerusalem,[2] "as doves flying to their windows"?[3] They are the families of Israel, gathered in great companies, or caravans, who are going to present themselves "before the Lord their God, in the place which he hath chosen."[4] The men

[1] Ruth 2: 4; Ps. 129: 8.

[2] They were accustomed to say *go up* to Jerusalem, because that city is built upon an elevated plateau.

[3] Is. 60: 8.

[4] Deut. 16: 16.

will appear there on two other occasions in the year, in May for the feast of Pentecost, and in September for the feast of Tabernacles; but the women, who are not under the same obligation to make this pilgrimage, and who can seldom undertake it more than once each year, usually reserve themselves for the passover feast. In the day-time the caravan makes its way through a delicious country, which is like one continued garden,[1] with the exception of a small number of dry places which the faith of the pilgrims leads them to pass over without murmurings;[2] and at night it halts at vast inns, or it disperses and seeks rest, if time permits, under tents hastily pitched in the open air. While traveling on, they sing in chorus some of those *songs of Maha-loth*,[3] that is to say, songs of the ascents (or goings-up), because they were in-

[1] Gen. 13: 10.
[2] Ps. 84: 6.
[3] Ps. 120–134.

tended to be repeated by the pilgrims as they went up to Jerusalem; for example, Psalm 125, commencing thus, "They that trust in the Lord shall be as mount Zion, which cannot be removed, but abideth for ever. As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the Lord is round about his people from henceforth even for ever;" or Psalm 126, ending thus, "They that sow in tears shall reap in joyous singing. He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him." But whilst you are traveling and whilst you are singing, my dear children, who shall protect your houses and your fields against enemies or against robbers? Be at ease; God has provided for this, for he forgets nothing which concerns us. He has said by the mouth of Moses, "No man shall desire thy land, when thou shalt go up to appear before the Lord thy God

thrice in the year."[1] Go then and celebrate your feast without anxiety; God defends your property, and that which God defends is well defended.[2] But what are those pilgrims going to do when once they have arrived at Jerusalem? I shall give you an abridged account of this, my children, for to relate the whole in detail would take too long.[3] Every family begins by providing itself with a lodging at Jerusalem for the days of the festival; and this is not easily secured; for the population of the city, which is about 120,000 souls in ordinary times,

[1] Ex. 34: 24.

[2] Perhaps there is an allusion to this touching promise in Ps. 125: 3: "For the rod of the wicked shall not rest upon the lot of the righteous."

[3] The celebration of the Jewish passover is described in detail in several numbers of the *Semeur*, 1836, under the title, *The Journey of Helon to Jerusalem.*

It is to be desired that this series, as entertaining as it is instructive, should be published in a separate volume. ("Helon's Pilgrimage to Jerusalem," translated from the German of Frederick Strauss, and abridged and edited by Rev. Baron Stow, of Boston, was published, Boston, Mass., in 1835, and forms one of the most interesting and valuable books in the department of treatises on Jewish antiquities. — Tr.)

becomes twenty-fold greater during the feast of the passover.[1] The feast continues seven days, of which the first and the last are the great days of the feast; and these are "days of holy convocation,"[2] or of public worship and of "Sabbath" rest (or complete repose); the intermediate days are divided between ordinary labor and the ceremonies of the festival. On the first day, as soon as the opening of the feast has been announced by sound of trumpet from the temple mount, the father of every family brings to the temple a lamb or a kid a year old and without blemish; he slays it in the court of the priests;[3] and after the priests have sprinkled the blood of the victim upon the altar of burnt offerings, he takes it to his dwelling and roasts it with fire.

[1] According to Josephus; Winer, *Realwörterbuch.*

[2] Lev. 23: 7, 8.

[3] Ordinarily, it was the priest who slew the victim; but on the day of the passover this function was performed by all the Israelites, to show that they formed a kingdom of priests.

When the evening has come, this lamb is placed, together with the unleavened bread and bitter herbs, upon a table around which all the members of the family assemble, standing, their shoes on their feet, their loins girt, their staves in their hands, like men ready to set out on a journey. The father of the family blesses the food placed upon the table, particularly the lamb of the passover, which he divides among all who are present; it is necessary that the lamb be eaten wholly, or, if some part of it should remain till the next morning, that part must be consumed by fire. At the beginning and at the end of the repast he blesses a cup of wine and passes it around several times, whilst the family are singing the *great Hallel*, that is to say, the *great thanksgiving;* such is the name given to Psalm 113 and those immediately following, including Psalm 118. Doubtless they must have sung with

peculiar feeling those words of Psalm 118: "This is the day which the Lord hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it." I ought not to forget to tell you that the youngest child of the family asks at the beginning of the meal, "What mean ye by this service?" Then the father of the family answers him by relating — just as he had formerly heard his own father relate — the history of that memorable night in which Israel went out of the land of Egypt and in which the feast of the passover was celebrated for the first time. These bitter herbs recall the days of bitterness passed in Egypt; these loaves of unleavened bread and this repast eaten while standing remind them of the hurried flight which did not suffer their fathers to wait for the dough to rise or to take their seats at the table; and this slain lamb is in remembrance of the lamb whose blood had been sprinkled upon "the two side-posts and the upper door-

post of the houses," to turn aside from them the destroying angel.[1] Next to the emotions peculiar to that first day, nothing is more touching than when, on the evening of the second day just after the sun had set, they go out into a field near Jerusalem and gather a handful of wheat to offer it in the temple, thus sanctifying the use of the fruits of the earth.[2] The other days of the feast are specially celebrated by numerous sacrifices. You say, perhaps, my dear children, that is not the part which would have pleased you best; how could one see with satisfaction gentle lambs and timid kids slain? But that was necessary, as you know, to direct the thoughts of men forward to that tender and innocent Victim who was to die for the sins of the world. Ah! those grand recollections, those solemn instructions, those family repasts, those psalms that

[1] Ex. 12: 7-14.
[2] Lev. 23: 10-14.

were sung, that magnificent temple with its vast courts and splendid colonnades, — how interesting must it all have been! You might well wish to be there — and I also!

But do you know what I should have especially desired, my young friends? I should have desired to be one in that caravan which you see in the distance going up to the feast from *Nazareth* to Jerusalem. And why? Is it because that caravan is richer or more honored than the others? On the contrary, it is less so; Nazareth was held in low esteem at that day, and the Jews said, a Nazarene! just as people among us thoughtlessly use epithets of contempt. Well then, children, what is it that attracts me to the caravan from Nazareth? Ah! it is because there is in it a child of twelve whom I would have ardently desired to know! And I am not alone in this feeling; for "many prophets and many kings have desired to

see him, and have not seen him, and to hear him, and have not heard him."[1] I can well believe this. The angels themselves stoop down from the heavenly heights to contemplate him and to follow all his footsteps, inquiring one of another, "What manner of child shall this be?" In whom a series of prophecies dating from the creation of the world lead them to foresee at once the "Lamb of God," who is to "take away our sins" by his bitter sacrifice, and the glorious Conqueror who shall "destroy the works of the devil," and the mighty King who shall gather the "nations for his inheritance and the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession." A child twelve years of age, who is growing up to be the "Saviour of the world." What a spectacle, my dear children! And when, having reached the age of twelve years, at which time the young Hebrew received the name of "*son of the cove-*

[1] Matt. 13: 17.

nant," and began to participate in the solemn feasts, he now goes up to Jerusalem for the first time, what an honor and what a privilege for the caravan that possesses this peerless child! That is true; but perhaps those who enjoyed this honor and privilege were not aware of it: nay, even Mary, his mother, and Joseph, whom, out of respect, he called his father, although he was the Son of God, were but imperfectly conscious of his true character. And the reason of this is found in the fact that the child Jesus was distinguished from other children only by his holy and sweet obedience; he did not teach and he did no miracles; he did not heal the sick; the time for all that had not yet come. Hence the Gospels which speak to us at such length of the last three years of the life of Jesus tell us almost nothing either of his childhood or of all the time preceding his baptism. In Saint Luke, for example, there are twenty-three chapters

relating to three years, and but one chapter devoted to thirty years! You would like to know more concerning those thirty years, would you not? But God has caused his Word to be written for our edification, not for our amusement; and if it speaks so little of the child Jesus, it is doubtless to teach us that a child ought not to cause himself to be spoken of, hidden as he is in the family or in the school, and waiting until God shall make a man of him and for the time when he should appear before the eyes of the world. But though Saint Luke says so little of the child Jesus, he does tell us some things about him, especially in connection with the passover feast; and what he says is full of instruction, as is all which is written in the Bible. The child Jesus, so humble and so modest, is, nevertheless, extraordinary in one thing — in one only: he is holy. He passed through all ages, from that of the child who is just born to

that of the full-grown man, in order to sanctify them all; and as the man Jesus is the model for men, so the child Jesus is the model for children. For this reason it is that I speak to you of him to-day. The greater number of you are nearly twelve years old, which was the age of Jesus at the time of the feast. Learn, then, from the child Jesus what a child of your age ought to be. Oh, my children, how good, happy, and lovely you would be, did you resemble him! And why should you not resemble him? The first thing to do in order to be like him is to know him well, and this we will try to do, by the help of God.

The child Jesus is a strict observer of the law of Moses and of the worship which it prescribed. After his birth and before the child had "knowledge to cry, My father, and my mother,"[1] he had been carried to the temple, and all that

[1] Is. 8: 4.

was commanded in the law of the Lord had been fulfilled with respect to him. But thus far it was less himself who had done it than his mother and his father who had done it for him; as it was in your case, dear children, when you were baptized. But now he has reached the age of discretion. And just as soon as the number of his years permits him to take part in the festivals at Jerusalem, he makes haste to profit by them; for it is easy to see that it is not obedience merely, but also the desire of his own heart, which leads him to Jerusalem with his parents. You will say, perhaps, Could not a child so filled with the grace of God, and so well instructed in his Word, have dispensed with doing that which is done by others, and with listening to that to which they are accustomed to listen? No, my children; Jesus is far from reasoning in that manner, either at twelve years of age or even at thirty. You remember that when at

thirty years of age John the Baptist refused to baptize him, saying to him, "I have need to be baptized by thee, and comest thou to me?"[1] Jesus answered him, "Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness." You remember, also, how scrupulously Jesus, even after having been declared to be the Son of God,[2] repairs to the synagogues every Sabbath and to the temple at every feast. It is thus that from his early childhood Jesus shows himself in all things "an Israelite indeed," humbly submitting himself to the law of Moses,[3] although he is the Son of God, and Moses is only the servant;[4] but for Jesus the word of Moses is the word of God, and to disobey Moses would have been to disobey God. Hence the holy eagerness with which he presents himself, at twelve years of age, at the passover feast; an eagerness

[1] Matt. 3: 14.
[2] Matt. 3: 17.
[3] Gal. 4: 4.
[4] Heb. 5: 6.

increased, you may rest assured, by the thought of going thither with his family: with his mother, his father, his brothers and sisters.[1] Because he loves them all tenderly, he takes delight at all times in their society; but he takes double delight in seeing himself encircled by them when he goes to render to God the worship which is due unto him. God becomes to him more adorable when he thus adores him in unison with his mother and all his relatives; and his mother and his friends become more dear to him while adoring God with him! Delightful simplicity of a docile, loving, and pious child!

My children, follow the example of Jesus. Christian worship has not in the New Testament, like the Jewish worship in the Old Testament, precise and minute laws designed to regulate the order, the time, the place, and every particular of its observance. It is a great pity that this is

[1] Matt. 13: 55, 56.

so, many people will say: we could act with more certainty and confidence if God had continued to decide all things for us. Say, rather, with more indolence of conscience; that for which you ask would not agree with the spirit of the gospel. Under the old covenant God treated his people like a people in their childhood, who must be led along as it were by leading strings; under the new dispensation he treats his people like men fully grown, who must be suffered to walk by themselves, the right path being pointed out to them. Shall the grown man regret the time when he walked in leading strings and sigh for its return, pretending that it was more comfortable? He will cherish no such regrets if he has any spirit or understanding. No more will the Christian regret his not having, like the Jew, a complete code of his religious duties, if he has understood the privilege and glory of a soul directly "taught of the Lord,"[1] that

[1] Is. 54: 13.

is to say, inwardly guided by the Holy Spirit; as reasonable would it be to become a Jew again, and to return to the ablutions, fasts, and sacrifices of the old economy. But in place of written rules we have the usages established every-where by the Christian Church and more especially by the Protestant Church — usages founded upon the Word of God alone. We have yearly festivals, with their communion services, and, above all, we have the weekly festival, Sunday, with its worship, its assemblies, and its schools. When a solemn feast returns, such, for instance, as Easter, now near at hand, let your minds, my dear children, be filled with that which you are to do, as was the mind of the child Jesus when going up to Jerusalem. A long and fatiguing journey is not required of you, as it was of him. "God is a Spirit," and every one, wherever he is, can adore him there. But seek so much the more earnestly to enter into

the spirit of the feast. For what purpose is this Easter feast, which is celebrated among all Christian nations? And what is the event which it recalls? Why is that table spread in the church? Why do those believers receive the bread and the wine, and those young people eat and drink with them for the first time? And what must I do in order to join them in my turn? Especially, my children, in this spirit consider Sunday, that festival of festivals, at once the greatest of all and the most common of all. Love that beautiful day which invites all the earth to rejoice together: the artisan to take his rest, the poor and afflicted to be of good cheer, and families to meet together in the name of the Lord. Open your eyes and your ears, and behold what grace God has bestowed on you in preparing for you on that day Sunday-schools to which you have only to repair, and Christian sermons which you have only to go and

hear and receive into your hearts. But, my friends, do you thoroughly appreciate this gift of a Sabbath? Do you know what a blessing from God will come upon you, if from your childhood you form the holy habit, for your entire life, of sanctifying the Sabbath with your families, of sanctifying it in the church, and of sanctifying it also in your houses? Let but one salutary impression be received and obeyed each Sunday, one good book perused, or one fervent prayer offered to God, — how much profit might this bring to you, and against how many snares might it protect you! Yes, my friends, when the devil seeks to destroy a poor child, when he wishes to make him wicked and worthless, a thief or a rioter, he begins by attacking his Sabbath: "Ah! my poor friend, is that your rest? You are very good to take so much trouble. Could you not find some better amusement than listening to a sermon? And

that Sunday-school, into the bargain! Your first communion — and how many people there are who have never communed at all!" It is thus that the devil speaks; and God speaks to you these words: "Forsake not the assembling of yourselves together, as the manner of some is."[1] Hear God, my friends, and God alone; you shall be profited thereby, even in this life. "Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added thereunto." It is impossible for you to think of all that may be gained by the right use of the Sabbath, even as regards the happiness of this life, the harmony of families, the development of the mind, and the acquisition of all that is good. Two years ago I was present in the city of Glasgow, Scotland, at a great religious assembly. The lord provost of the city, or, as we should say, the mayor, a pious man,

[1] Heb. 10: 25.

who presided over the meeting, began by informing the public that instead of hearing ministers, they were to listen that evening to some working-men. And several young workmen of from twenty to thirty years of age spoke, and their speaking was quite equal, if not superior, to that of many pastors and of many representatives of the people. I had never heard any thing like it. I inquired how they had learned to speak so well, and this is the answer that was made: "They owe it to the Sabbath. They meet together every Sunday to converse with one another concerning the Bible and whatever may serve to promote God's kingdom in the world. And thus they become both good Christians and good orators."

It was not his body only which Jesus carried to the feast, but also his mind; it was not his hands only which he lifted up to God his Father, but also his heart; this you would have readily understood, chil-

dren, even if Saint Luke had said nothing on the subject. But you would not have expected to see him remaining alone behind the caravan, so that after three days had passed his parents find him sitting in the temple in the midst of the doctors, "who were astonished at his wisdom and his answers." Apparently the two preceding days had been spent in a similar manner: what eager desire to be instructed in divine things! It would have seemed even excessive in an ordinary child. Certainly if Jesus had not had a special mission as the Son of God, he would not have caused three days of anxiety to his parents, and particularly to his tender mother, by remaining in Jerusalem without their knowledge. But I put aside that which pertains to his exceptional nature and mission, and occupy myself only with that which can and ought to be imitated by all children. Again I say, my dear children, what an

eager desire did he show to be instructed in divine things! There are so many children who shun the school, and who are frightened at the very sight of a teacher; he, on the contrary, makes a school expressly for himself, and detains the teachers in order to question them in private, after having heard them in public.

For observe this well, it is to instruct himself and not to instruct others that Jesus remains in the temple. Jesus at twelve years of age does not teach: he listens, he puts questions, he modestly answers those that are addressed to him, according to the custom of Jewish doctors with their disciples. You would perhaps have thought that Jesus would have begun to preach, to harangue, to rebuke, with the authority of his divine nature and his superior intelligence. He could have done this with ease, assuredly; for who could more justly say: "I have more understanding than all my teachers, because I

keep thy precepts"?[1] But such is not his will; he prefers to say with young Elihu: "Days should speak and multitude of years should teach wisdom."[2] His time will come "to teach with authority and not as the scribes;"[3] but to-day he does not teach, he learns; he is not a doctor, he is a child. A child who sets up for a teacher is a sad spectacle, my friends, and one that Jesus never thought of exhibiting. He is far too humble, too modest for that, too truly one of his own age. It is sometimes thought to be a great eulogy on a child to say of him that he is far in advance of his age. In advance of his age? So much the better, if that means that he is more pious, more thoughtful, more docile, more studious than most children are at his age. But if it means that he possesses manners, a tone, an assurance, an air of authority, which are not natural

[1] Ps. 119: 99, 100.
[2] Job 32: 7.
[3] Matt. 7: 29.

to his age, so much the worse truly; far better would I like to see him *of* his age, as was Jesus. A child ought to be of his own age, and conformed to it; for his age is God's time for him. Do not speak to me of those children who are little men; for them to be so is of no advantage to either body or mind, and to the soul least of all.

But you may ask, Had those doctors any thing to teach Jesus, when they themselves so imperfectly apprehended the law of God that, twenty years later, they would join the Pharisees in crying out for the death of him whose "wisdom and answers" they are to-day admiring? It is true, children, that they were to act thus; and yet Jesus listens to them, and learns by listening to them. It is true, as he said subsequently, the doctors "say and do not."[1] The greater part of them were not to be imitated, although there

[1] Matt. 23: 3.

might be some good men among them;[1] but they had, nevertheless, many good things to say, having in their hands the books of Moses, and being accustomed to meditate on them from generation to generation. You perceive, for example, that when Herod asks these teachers where Christ should be born, there is no hesitation in their reply: "In Bethlehem of Judæa: for thus it is written by the prophet, And thou Bethlehem, in the land of Juda, art not the least among the princes of Juda: for out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule my people Israel."[2] John the Baptist or the aged Simeon could not have made a better answer. They were able to say to Jesus many things true, instructive, and useful concerning the Scriptures, the prophecies, and the prophets who "wrote of him."[3] He listens to them, therefore, as

[1] Mark 12: 34; Acts 5: 38, 39.
[2] Matt. 2: 5, 6.
[3] John 5: 46.

men placed in the seat of Moses by the providence of God and with the approval of their fellowmen. He listens to them, but he looks to God. The word of man is for him but one means of learning to know the Word of God. Moreover, if unfortunately they were mistaken in some particulars, since "the great are not always wise, neither do the aged understand judgment,"[1] the child Jesus has his Bible, which he puts above every thing, and to which he subordinates every thing; for he does not forget that which he has read in that Bible, "Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to thy word."[2] And you can not doubt that the same feeling which led him to seek so eagerly the instructions of the Jewish doctors led him to seek with still greater eagerness the instructions of the Word of God. To this

[1] Job 32: 9.
[2] Ps. 119: 9.

pure fountain he constantly repairs to draw water. Methinks I see him seated by his mother's side, reading and reading again the writings of the prophets, pausing perhaps over the predictions that declare his own sufferings and his own glory, asking himself, it may be, what this Twenty-second Psalm or this Fifty-third chapter of Isaiah foretells concerning himself — passages the meaning of which is gradually disclosed to him. It is thus he is acquiring gradually that wisdom which is admired by the doctors, while they do not understand its origin; it is thus, also, that he is preparing to repel the temptations of the devil in the desert, with no other weapon than a few citations from the divine Word, but citations so well chosen and so adapted to his purpose that with three strokes they totally dismount the battery of the enemy. That is an example for you to consider, my friends; like Jesus at your age, feel the worth of God's

truth and of his Word. Seize opportunities for hearing it; put questions in private to those who are able to explain to you its contents — to your parents, your teachers, and the pastors of the church. But above all, above all, read the Scriptures, *search* the Scriptures. It is there that you will find the light which shall enable you to answer suitably all questions when you shall be interrogated, and to hold your ground firmly against all temptations when you shall be tempted. "My son, if thou wilt receive my words, and hide my commandments with thee; so that thou incline thine ear unto wisdom, and apply thine heart to understanding; yea, if thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding; if thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures; then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God. For the Lord giveth wisdom: out of his mouth com-

eth knowledge and understanding. . . . Then shalt thou understand righteousness, and judgment, and equity; yea, every good path."[1] How good that is, and how beautiful, my dear children! You know that in these days every body wishes to know how to read; but what do people read? That coachman on his seat, what is he reading? His newspaper. That laundress on her cart? Her newspaper. That porter at the corner of the street? His newspaper. That shopwoman at her counter? Her newspaper. We see nothing but that in every body's hands, even in the hands of many children. I do not regard it as wrong to read one's newspaper — if it is good — or to keep one's self acquainted with public affairs. But, children, there is only too much talk about public affairs; they are spoken of at random, and particularly by children, who would do better for the most part not to

[1] Prov. 2: 1–6, 9.

meddle with them; every one would be a gainer by it. "The one thing needful" which Jesus Christ exhorts us to choose, with Mary,[1] is not public affairs, but those of our Father who is in heaven; and the reading to which Saint Paul exhorts Timothy to give himself is not the newspaper, but the holy Scriptures.[2] Do you recall to mind that beautiful promise of David to those who read them assiduously: "Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the Lord; and in his law doth he meditate day and night. And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper." [3] A delightful image, my dear children. Do you wish

[1] Luke 10: 42.
[2] 1 Tim. 4: 13.
[3] Ps. 1: 1-3.

to be like that tree "planted by the water," whose sap is vigorous, whose leaf is green, and the fruit ripe in its season? Meditate, meditate, meditate, day and night, upon the holy Scriptures! Do you wish to "prosper in whatsoever you shall do," to succeed in your studies, your profession, your business; to be happy in marriage, in the family, in all your undertakings? Meditate, meditate, on the Holy Scriptures. I say, *Meditate.* The point is not to read in haste and then shut the book and say, I have read my chapter. You must pause and dwell upon that which you read, and lift up your hearts to God. Open the New Testament in this spirit and turn to Rom. 12: 10, where you will find these words: "Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love." Then say to yourself, I must be gentle and amiable with my brothers and sisters, my teachers and my parents. "In honour preferring one another." How many

times have I been jealous of my comrades! O my God, make me humble, respectful, inclined to take the lowest place! You proceed: "Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord." Am I active, industrious, alert, religious, fervent, faithful? One verse read in this spirit, which is the spirit of the child Jesus, is a treasure. I know well that it is not easy to read in this manner, either for the little ones or even for the great. In order to read thus, one must not be negligent nor indolent, nor a trifler nor — that which too many of you are, my children. Begin this day to do better, to read your Bibles in this manner, since God encourages you thereto by so great a reward. Be of good courage, my children. Suppose that you were to rise every day a half-hour — is that too much? — or even a quarter of an hour earlier than heretofore, in order to read the Bible, asking God to give you his Holy Spirit that you may understand

it aright. Do not be troubled if many things in it appear obscure to you; mark the words, and ask an explanation from your parents, teachers, or pastors; but ask it especially from God. "Do not interpretations belong to God?"[1] Only read with the heart of Jesus Christ, and the God of Jesus Christ will guide you; and perhaps, at twelve years of age, like him, you will be already filled with the light of God and with the wisdom of God.

In thus studying the Scriptures, my dear children, the child Jesus well knows his own desire. He wishes to prepare himself to do upon the earth the work which his Father had given him to do: "To seek and to save that which was lost."[2] That work of which he said at the end, "I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do;"[3] and of which he had said during the first stages of his ministry: "My

[1] Gen. 40: 8.
[2] Luke 19: 10.
[3] John 17: 4.

meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work,"[1] is already occupying him at twelve years of age, and already is he preparing for it, as we perceive by his answer to his mother: "Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" Jesus is an earnest, thoughtful child. He comprehends that life was given him not for his own amusement or benefit, but to glorify God and to do good unto men; and as all his time and all his strength are not too much for so great an object, he is preparing himself for it long in advance. It is by serving God at twelve years of age that he is training himself to serve him at thirty. He serves him with a self-devotion, a self-forgetfulness which leads him to subordinate every thing to his task, not excepting his tenderest and most allowable affections. It is thus that Jesus at the age of twelve, living wholly for his work, commences with teaching by

[1] John 4: 34.

example that which he was afterwards to teach in words: "He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me."[1] And you, my children, why, think you, has God placed you in the world? Young as you are, you are not without thought sometimes respecting the future and respecting the manner in which you shall employ your life, if God prolongs it. What, then, do you say to yourselves at such times? Come, my friends, consider well. Do you say within yourself, How shall I act in order to acquire much knowledge? or, What shall I do in order to distinguish myself in my profession? or, What shall I do in order to become rich? (that is the common inquiry, is it not?); or, again — But no! no one of you has said to himself, What shall I do that I may be able to eat and drink and amuse myself at my will? And yet these questions, my dear children, are not all of

[1] Matt. 10: 37.

them bad; there are some of them which are even good; but such are not the questions which Jesus would have put to himself in your circumstances. That which pre-occupies his mind is neither to enjoy life nor to make to himself a name: it is to do the work which God has given him to do. And you, my children, will you not put this question to *your* hearts?

God makes nothing in vain. He knew when he placed you in the world why he placed you in it. He has a work for you to do, for each one of you individually. I need not say that this work is not the same as that of Jesus. Ah! what man, what angel, what created being, would presume to intervene, in the least possible degree, in the work of our redemption? "I, even I, am the Lord; and beside me there is no saviour." [1] Nor is your work the same in extent as Saint Paul's; to traverse the entire earth, to sow it with

[1] Is. 43: 11.

new churches, to turn to Christ thousands of souls, that is given to but one man in a hundred thousand, to but one man in millions! To Jesus, the work of Jesus; to Paul, the work of Paul; but to you, your work, which God has expressly prepared for you, and you for the work. Perhaps he is calling you to some great thing: to carry the gospel to the heathen, like the missionary Casalis; to found a charitable institution, like Francke; to recreate a parish, to civilize a district, like Oberlin. You are astonished to hear me say this; but when Saul of Tarsus, when Jesus himself, were at your age, who imagined what they would one day accomplish in the world? "What manner of child shall this be?"[1] Yet for the greater number of children, and probably for the majority of you, my friends, God has in view a task more humble and more obscure. But whether humble or glorious,

[1] Luke 1: 66.

obscure or splendid, is of small moment before God. "For the Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart."[1] That which renders a man great in his eyes is not a great task; it is great faithfulness. Only be faithful, and you will have the joy of being "co-workers together with God," who will reveal to you day by day the path in which you ought to walk. But if you are not faithful, God, who never has need of us, will easily find means to perform without you that which it pleased him to do through you; and you will lose your labor and his reward.

What then, my friends, do you say to this? Whilst others are thinking only of their own affairs, is there some one among you who is saying within himself, As for me, I wish, like Jesus, "to be about my Father's business"? My work which

[1] 1 Sam. 16: 7.

thou hast prepared for me, O my God, give me the understanding to discern it and the fidelity to perform it. I am young, I have my whole course of life before me, I desire to use it in order to glorify thy name and to do good to men; only lead me, I follow thee! Is there some one among you, my boys, is there some one among you, my daughters, who is now speaking thus to God within the heart? I am persuaded that there are several, that there are many such. That would be so directly in unison, not only with the gospel written in books, but also with that other gospel which God has written in the heart of each one of us. What can be more consoling than to say to one's self, I shall pass over the earth, not as a noxious hornet, nor as the useless butterfly, but like the bee which gives its precious honey; and when I come to die, I shall leave after me upon the earth the good which I have done. Yes, my children,

to save our souls through Jesus Christ, and then to do good like Jesus Christ, are the only worthy aims in life. While waiting to become men and for God to show you what you have to do as men, begin, my children, by doing the good which you can do as children. You can do much good — very quietly. Do you believe that Jesus was not doing it habitually to all around him, to his brothers and sisters, to his parents also, and to every body? Merely by seeing him, one was learning to trust in God, to deny one's self, to yield the first place to others, to suffer without repining, to believe, to love, to pray. Do likewise, my young friends, and let people be always sure of finding you, like him, employed about some good thing. Happy the child of whom it can be said, Why are you looking for him? Do you not know where to find him, and in what employment? reading in his Bible, working in his school, obeying his father or his mother, giving

good advice and a good example to his little brothers and sisters, forgetting himself in trying to be of service to every one, and while performing his little task of to-day exercising himself for his great work of to-morrow, whatever that may be! Yes, happy is that child! Happy the family, happy the school, which can number many like him!

I have spoken to the children of twelve years, or nearly that, because that is the age of the child Jesus and also the age of the greater part of your number. But I see, too, those before me who are smaller, who are eight years of age, seven years, six years, and less. Are they so young that Jesus has nothing to teach them? Oh, no! Jesus is for every one, and the smallest are those whom he forgets least of all.[1] I do not know who is the youngest among you; but if I knew, I would read to him this verse which is written

[1] Matt. 19: 13, 14.

expressly for him: "And the little [1] child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, being filled with wisdom: and the grace of God was upon him." [2] Jesus was yet quite a little child when there was already observed in him something altogether peculiar. And what was this? Was it his mind? His witty answers, his intelligence? That is not said. Was it a kind of life apart, separated from the cares, the sports, the joys, and the sorrows of other children? Nor is that said of him. This is all that is said: "He was filled with wisdom: and the grace of God was upon him." He was wise with that wisdom which makes a child fear God, obey his parents, respect his teachers, do good and shun evil; in one word, he loved God. The grace of God was upon him: God approved him, kept him, blessed him; in one word, God loved him. Loving God,

[1] In the French Version, it is "little" child.
[2] Luke 2: 40.

beloved of God, such was Jesus; and behold in him what you ought to be, my friends; not one of you is too young for that.

If the older children love traveling, the younger love stories, and I will tell you a story now that I believe is quite true.

A pastor was called one day to see a little boy dangerously ill, whose recovery was not hoped for. He was seated upon his bed, supported by a pillow, and was reading in a book of hymns which he held in his hand; his pale, thin cheeks showed that he had been long sick, and yet he seemed to be happy. After a moment's conversation, the pastor said to him, "Do you think that you will get well?"

"No, sir, the doctor says that I can live but a few weeks longer, and he would not be surprised if I should die suddenly."

"Are you ready to die?"

"Oh, yes, sir; sometimes I feel sad at the thought of leaving my father and

mother, but I think then that in heaven I shall be delivered from sin and be with the Saviour; and I hope that papa and mamma will soon come to heaven. Sometimes I am afraid of being only too impatient to depart."

"What makes you think that you are prepared to die?"

He hesitated a moment and then said:

"It is because Jesus Christ has said, 'Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out.' I believe that I love the Saviour, and I desire to go and be near him, and to become holy."

While the pastor was conversing with him, they heard little boys laughing and playing under the window, and the sick child exclaimed: —

"Oh, how much happier I am now than when I was well and used to play out-of-doors, without thinking of God or of heaven! There is not a little boy in the street happier than I."

Not only can a young child secure his own salvation: he can also help to save the souls of others. Another story to show this to you plainly.

A little boy six years of age had just died; his father and his mother were weeping beside his body. A laboring-man, a mason, presents himself and asks permission to see him. At first he is repulsed as making an untimely visit; but he insists so strongly that they conclude to allow him to enter: he comes in, sees the child and bursts into tears. Perceiving the surprise of the parents, "You do not know," he says, "why I weep; it is because God made use of this little child to touch my heart. One day I was coming down from a roof by a very high ladder; this child was standing at the foot of the ladder. 'Were you not afraid up there?' he said to me; and then, continuing, 'I know why you were not afraid; it is because you prayed this morn-

ing.' I had not prayed, but I have done it every day since." Could we not say of those two little children what Saint Luke says of Jesus Christ: "They were filled with wisdom: and the grace of God was upon them"?

But if there are children younger than twelve years in the schools, there are also those that are older. To such as these, and to young people still older, present in this assembly, who can not any longer be always under the eyes of their mothers, or guided like children by teachers, what lesson will Jesus the youth impart? Listen, my young friends. Concerning the life of Jesus, from his visit to the temple up to his baptism, that is to say from twelve years of age until thirty, we have only two verses; but there is much to learn in those two verses, and especially in one word which occurs in them. See if it will strike you as it does me. "And he went down with them and came to Naza-

reth, and was subject unto them; but his mother kept all these sayings in her heart. And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man." Jesus did not remain stationary; the wisdom and the grace, which, as we have just seen, appeared even in his tenderest childhood, were continually growing and strengthening; thus the youthful Jesus completely realized in his personal history that beautiful language in the book of Proverbs: "The path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day."[1] A great lesson for you, my friends: there must be constant, unceasing advancement in goodness. It is true, likewise, that if one is not advancing, he is drawing back. That is not, however, the word which I wish chiefly to commend to you; it is this: "*He was subject unto them.*" Jesus was no longer a child; he was approaching the age of

[1] Prov. 4: 18.

eighteen, twenty, or twenty-five years; and yet "he was subject unto them." Jesus had shown himself in the temple, in the midst of the doctors, clothed with a mission from God which he could not sacrifice even to his parents; and yet "he was subject unto them." He had more wisdom and grace than any man; he was the Son of God, the Saviour, and his parents were but sinners, who, like all others, had need of him in order to be saved; and yet "he was subject unto them." After that, my friends, ought you or ought you not, are you willing or are you not willing, to be in subjection to your parents and your superiors? I ask you this and I leave you to be the judges. "Honour thy father and thy mother!"

If instead of living where and when he lived, Jesus had lived in France and in our days, do you believe that he would have been less obedient to his parents?

You do not dare to think it. He would, however, have witnessed opposite examples and have heard opposite maxims. Where do we see amongst us to-day that obedience on the part of youth which he exhibited? Go into our streets, our places of public resort. That band of young men from the schools, combining together in a disorderly manner, and in a body presenting their complaints to the National Assembly, and finally compelling the authorities to disperse them by force, were they animated by the spirit of Jesus? Were they obedient to their teachers, submissive to the discipline of the schools, to the will of their fathers and their mothers, and sedulous to please them? Visit our homes; listen to that discussion, political, literary, philosophical, or, it may be, religious. Whose is that voice that rises above all others? Who is it that expresses his opinion so decidedly, in language so peremptory? That speaker who takes the

lead in the conversation, who has no doubts on any subject, who bluntly interrupts others as they are speaking, — who is he? It is a young man (I will not even suppose that it can be a young girl); it is a little man, twenty years of age; it is his father whom he is now interrupting; those whom he is lecturing are contemporaries of his father, men, it may be, of ripe understanding, enlightened and well informed; and who knows if there is not among them some aged servant of God who has learned to say, like good John Newton: "When I was young, I was sure of many things; now I am sure of but two things — that I am a miserable sinner, and that Jesus Christ has redeemed me with his blood." Go out of our cities and search through the country. There is the same spirit of insubordination, assuming forms more gross, and passing from words to deeds. Sarcastic Diogenes went about in the day-time with his lantern

in his hand, seeking for a man. Take your lantern, my friends, and go through the cities and the fields, through drawing-rooms and shops, through palaces and cottages, go and seek for filial piety and parental authority; and when you shall have found a son of eighteen or twenty or twenty-five years obedient to his parents, ring out the bells of Christendom to proclaim to the world the discovery of this wonder!

And do you know what results from this state of things? The family is the cradle of society. Such as a man has been, while young, toward his parents, such will he be toward his teachers, his pastors, toward the magistrates of the land and all human order and government. If subject to his parents in his youth, he will have accustomed himself to be so to all the different authorities which God has established, and which are the pillars of society and of the Church. Disobedient

and disrespectful towards his parents, he learns to be thus toward all his superiors. In the school he resists his teachers and neglects the precious means of instruction which God has placed within his reach. In the Church he finds it easier to criticize the pastor than to profit by his exhortations; and often, alas! he gradually absents himself from the house of God, and lives without any spiritual direction or counsel whatever. In the State he treats authority, whatever it may be and whatever it may do, as an enemy, whose every act he regards with suspicion: there is not a measure which he does not censure pitilessly, systematically; not a functionary, however small or however great, from the mayor to the king or the president of the republic, of whom he does not speak without reflection, without respect, and without charity. But is this *speaking*, then, so great an evil? Yes, my friends; for it is written: "Thou shalt not speak

evil of the ruler of thy people."[1] And this evil is the beginning of all others. We ought all to know this; memory need not go back very far to assure us of it. Men begin by speaking evil of established authority; to love succeeds coldness; to coldness, disaffection; to disaffection, hatred; and hatred seizes the first opportunity which offers to pick up paving-stones and erect barricades.[2] . . .

Therefore I press upon your consciences, my friends, this word of Saint Luke, of the Holy Spirit: "*He was subject unto them.*" Jesus was subject. Would that I were able to go and speak that word to all classes of society, to small and great, to children and parents, to pupils and teachers, to wives and to husbands, to the ruled and to rulers, to mayors and to prefects, to ministers of state, and to the National Assembly and to the president of

[1] Ex. 22: 28; Acts 23: 5.

[2] Referring to the fearful street fights in Paris with which French revolutions have commonly begun.—TR.

the republic; for every one ought to be subject to something, and all ought to be subject to God.[1] Do you believe, I asked just now, that Jesus, if he lived to-day and in France, instead of having lived at Nazareth eighteen hundred years ago, would be less subject to his parents than he was then? If possible, he would be more so, in order to oppose to this great evil of our day a more salutary example and a more energetic protest. That example, that protest, I expect from you, my young friends, not in words but in deeds. Subject to your parents, your pastors, and your teachers; subject to the magistrates and the laws; subject to all principalities and powers; show that Jesus is in your hearts, and let him live again in you, in the midst of this perverse generation, who mock him with their lips while denying him by their acts, and who appear at times to borrow his sacred name only the better

[1] Eccles. 5: 8.

to conceal their neglect of his commandments.

I beg of you all, children and youth, my dear friends, to lay up in your hearts all that which I have just said to you. Ever have before your eyes the example of the child Jesus and strive to be like him. You can not do this of yourselves; but he it is who will give you strength for it if you believe in him. Go to him as poor sinners, to obtain grace through his blood poured forth for you; go to him as creatures weak and wicked, "who are not able of themselves to think one good thought." Yes, my friends, the secret of living like Jesus is to live with Jesus, through faith in Jesus.

Fathers and mothers, you will not be jealous because I have reserved for your children all the time at my disposal on this special occasion. To preserve and strengthen the salutary impressions which they may have received to-day; to save

the precious seed, dropped into their young hearts from birds of the air, from the burning sun, and from thorns, be assured that it is upon you, after God, that I rely. They must sanctify the Sabbath and take part in holy convocations; but how shall they sanctify the Sabbath in holy assemblies if you are not present there with them? They ought to read, meditate, search the Scriptures; but how shall they read, meditate, and search if you do not read, if you do not meditate, if you do not search as well as they? They should devote themselves to the work which God has prepared for them in the future, and become fitted for that by performing to-day the work of this present time; but how shall they gain preparation for it, how shall they accomplish it, if you do not set them the example of doing their work by doing yours before them? They ought to be obedient to you; but shall they be obe-

dient if you do not maintain parental authority, and if you do not cause that authority to be respected? Great, great is your responsibility; the greatest in the world, because the authority which God has deposited in your hands is at once the strongest and the gentlest that exists upon the earth. In saying this to you, my brothers and sisters, I do not separate my condition from yours; in exhorting you, I exhort myself. How guilty shall we be if we place ourselves between our children and Jesus Christ! How guilty to-day, and how wretched to-morrow, at the day of judgment, when God shall divide the responsibility of our children's perdition between them, the devil, and us! But "I am persuaded better things of you, though I thus speak."[1] We desire to believe in Jesus ourselves, do we not? were it only to lead our children to faith in him; we desire to be made like unto Jesus, were it only that our

[1] Heb. 6: 9.

children might resemble him; we desire to live with Jesus, were it only that our children might live with him. Our children shall become our teachers in their turn, and perhaps parental love will establish in more than one heart the beginning of a work of grace which could never have been begun by the fear of God's judgments alone, or by gratitude for his benefits alone. Oh! what then shall be the joy of the last day, when it will be impossible to decide between us and our children, whether to them or to us can be more justly applied that beautiful maxim of the Saviour, "It is more blessed to give than to receive;"[1] and when they and we shall all of us humble ourselves together, with one heart, at the feet of a crucified Saviour, so that he who began by giving us all may end by receiving that for which he chiefly hungers and thirsts, the souls he has redeemed and the hearts he has renewed.

[1] Acts 20: 35.

LIKE CHILD, LIKE MAN.

LIKE CHILD, LIKE MAN.

MY dear children, it is to you, and even to the youngest among you, that I address myself to-day; and I am going to speak as if I had only little boys and little girls to hear me. The fathers and mothers will not complain of this; and with regard to the others, to whom I speak every Sunday in the year (and sometimes at greater length than they would wish), they will profit by this discourse quite as much as if it had been prepared for them, if they are only willing to listen in that spirit of a little child, which Jesus so earnestly recommended. Who knows the result? They will regret perhaps, after having heard me, that they are not little children

[1] Delivered at the Oratoire, Paris, March 28, 1852, at the service for the schools of the Reformed Church.

in fact. You will see that they need consolation on account of their years. Well, I will console them; but I wish this festival to be yours. Try to listen to me well, and I will try to make myself well understood.

Even a child makes it known by his doings whether his work will be pure, and whether it will be right.[1] **— Proverbs 20: 11.**

My dear children, Hazaël had surely no need of being advised to listen carefully when the prophet Elisha foretold to him all that should befall him. Do you remember that story? Elisha had just arrived at Damascus, which was to Syria what Paris is to France. The king of Syria, Benhadad, who was sick at that time, sent to him Hazaël, one of the officers of his court, to inquire if he should be healed of his disease; for even the heathen regarded Elisha as a prophet

[1] In the English Version we read, "Whether his work be pure, and whether it be right." Either the present or the *future* tense conveys the sense of the original. — TR.

after he had healed Naaman of his leprosy. When Hazaël came before Elisha and had executed the commission of the king his master, Elisha kept his eyes fixed upon him for a long time, and at last he wept. And Hazaël said, "Why weepeth my lord?" And Elisha answered, "Because I know the evil that thou wilt do unto the children of Israel: their strong holds wilt thou set on fire, and their young men wilt thou slay with the sword, and wilt rip up their women, and dash in pieces their children." To which Hazaël having replied, "But what, is thy servant a dog, that he should do this great thing?" Elisha added, "The Lord hath shewed me that thou shalt be king over Syria." The next day Hazaël smothered Benhadad by spreading on his face a thick cloth dipped in water. Then he sat down upon Benhadad's throne in his stead, and committed all the wicked deeds which the prophet had declared to him.

If I could foretell to you, as Elisha to Hazaël, that which is to happen to you; if God were to place before my eyes a picture of your lives, and I could say to you, "The Lord hath shown me" that you shall be rich and honored, or that you shall be poor and obscure; that you shall attain to white hairs, or that you shall die young; that you shall enjoy robust health, or that you shall drag about a feeble and suffering body; that you shall be surrounded by a numerous family, or that you shall be alone in the world; that you shall remain in France, or that you shall cross the sea and become established in England or even in America, — if I could tell you all that, you would listen to me with the greatest eagerness, would you not? But in order to know such things, one must be a prophet, which I am not; and to say them without knowing them, one must be a fortune-teller, which I would not be for any thing in the world,

knowing that the practice is an abomination before God.[1] Besides, if I knew what is to befall you, I would not tell it you unless God should command me to do so, as he certainly had commanded Elisha. For it would be exposing you to great misfortunes and to great temptations. Was it an advantage to Benhadad to have desired knowledge of the future, or to Hazaël to possess such knowledge? Blessed be God, my children, that he hath hidden from us our future lives!

There is, however, one thing which I *am* able to tell you in regard to the future; a thing which will excite your curiosity less than the things I do not tell you, but a thing of real interest and value, and the only one that it is good for you to know. I can tell you "whether your work will be pure, and whether it will be right;" whether you will *do* that work on the earth which God has here given

[1] Deut. 18: 11, 12.

you to do; whether you will do it *rightly*, without turning either to the right hand or to the left from the path in which God wishes you to walk; and whether you will do it *purely*, in a spirit well-pleasing in the sight of God, who "weigheth the spirits" and who "looketh on the heart." In order to know that, I have no need to be a prophet: I have only to see what you are and what you are doing at the present hour; for it is written in my text, "Even a child makes it known by his doings whether his work will be pure, and whether it will be right."

How is it that your acts at the present time can truly make known what shall be *your work*, and whether you will do what God has given you to do; whilst, on the other hand, they can not make known what shall be *your history*, and whether you shall be rich or poor, in good or bad health, live few or many years, be a dweller in Paris, in London, or in New

York? The difference has this origin. Your work depends upon you alone, because it proceeds naturally from your heart, as the fruit from the tree; but your history is shaped by a thousand things not dependent on you: the country, the climate, the government, the commerce, the prevailing diseases, war, peace, every thing, in short, may affect your future life. A gardener to whom you show a seed will only need to look at it to tell you the fruit which that seed will produce if God gives it life, whether it be peach, cherry, or almond; but he can not know whether the weather will be favorable, the sun warm, the clouds full of rain, the soil fertile; still less can he foresee whether a hostile hand, that of a bad child, for instance, shall come and beat down the fruit, or pluck up the tree while it is still very young. He knows the one thing and knows not the others, because the fruit is in the seed and all the

rest is not there. Well, children, I am the gardener, and your acts of to-day which I can look at are the seed, or, better still, the seed is your heart as disclosed to me by those acts. Knowing your heart, I know in advance what will be your work: good, if the heart is good; bad, if the heart is bad; but I do not foresee your history, because the "same event happeneth unto all," good or bad, God causing his sun to rise and his rain to fall "on the just and on the unjust." Your work is in your heart, and your history is not there.

But perhaps you do not fully understand what I mean by the work which God has given you to do. I am about to explain this to you more clearly, and you will see how much more interesting it is than to know whether you will be king of Syria.

God, my children, who placed the vine upon the earth to give to man "wine

which rejoiceth his heart," and the oak to lend him its shade and to furnish him its precious wood, has placed us here in order to do good, following the example of Jesus Christ, the model man, "who went about doing good."[1] But within this general work, which is the same for all, there lies also a special work which exists for each one of us. Look at a band of reapers: they are working in the same field, but they are not all doing the same thing; one cuts the wheat with a scythe; another rakes it into a heap; a third binds it in sheaves; a fourth gathers it into barns. Likewise we, all of us, being called to do good, are not all called to do it in the same manner; but God marks out for each one his place and his task, according to his wisdom: your work is not mine, my work is not yours; the work of a man is one thing, the work of a woman is another; the work of a father

[1] Acts 10: 38.

of a family is one thing, that of a young man is another; the work of the master is one, that of the servant is another; the work of the teacher is one thing, another work belongs to the pupil; and thus it is with the rest. God, who chose for each one of us his special work, takes care to arrange and adapt our faculties, our health, our time, our history, and even the duration of our lives, with reference to that work. Thus is there opened before each one of us that beautiful pathway of good works which Saint Paul exhorts us to follow: "We were created in Christ Jesus unto good works which God hath before prepared [1] that we should walk in them." [2] You hear this. God creates us for the good works, and prepares the good works for us; and then he says, "Walk," while urging us into the good road which his own hand has cleared

[1] See margin of English Version, Eph. 2: 10.— Tr.
[2] Eph. 2: 10.

for us, and which we have only henceforth to pursue straight on, without departing from it to the right hand or to the left. For we *can* follow it, and it is possible, also, *not* to follow it. God gives direction to us all, but he forces no one; some persons do their work, and others — alas! the greater number — do not perform theirs. And for that reason, my children, I am so anxious to know whether you will do yours.

There is but one man who has done his work in perfection: it is the Son of man, Jesus Christ. His work was to glorify God and to save us by shedding his blood upon the cross for the remission of our sins. This work he has so well fulfilled that not one action, not one word, not one gesture, is wanting. The law of God is not more exactly inscribed on the pages of a book than it was faithfully carried out in the whole life and conduct of Jesus Christ. Thus, when he said before

his death, "I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do," his own heart, God, and men confirm the testimony which he bears concerning himself, and which no one besides himself has so fully deserved. Yes, my children, Jesus Christ finished his work; otherwise, we could not this day stand before God with his salvation in our souls, his peace in our hearts, and his name on our lips. Yet, thanks be unto him, there are also, though at a great distance from him, other men who have accomplished, not perfectly, but still faithfully, the work which God had given them to do, and who, when dying, have been enabled to say to God, humbly but tranquilly, "I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do." I will cite one of these instances; for you love stories, and I love them, too, when they are quite true and certain, like this which I am going to tell you. Fictitious stories are of men, but true ones are of God.

In an elevated valley, formed by a detached group of the Vosges Mountains, and named the *Ban-de-la-Roche*, there lived less than a hundred years since a small, distinct community which, though in the heart of Alsace and at the distance of only twelve leagues from Strasburg, had remained in an almost barbarous condition. These poor people had for houses only miserable cabins built in the rocks. They had so little desire to instruct their children that they obtained for schoolmasters those who were willing to undertake the business at the lowest price; they were paid less than the wages of a shepherd, and the greater part of these teachers were unable to read readily. The earth was not further advanced in improvements than the men. Here on the side of a mountain was land so sloping that it threatened to slide down at any moment; there in the plain were waters which either lay in stagnant pools or over-

flowed the country, having no bed to receive them. You will understand the condition of agriculture under such circumstances. Indeed, there was not much to be cultivated. The soil is too stony and the climate, in general, too cold to suffer the vine or even grain to flourish, and the potato, which had been introduced into this region in the great famine of the year 1709 (for up to that time the people had lived on wild apples and pears), had completely deteriorated, and no pains had been taken to improve the variety in use. Besides all this, there were no practicable roads, either communicating with the highway to Strasburg or even for going from one village to another; and in a country where there are no roads, ideas do not circulate any more freely than men or vehicles, and every one remains in his ignorance. With regard to varied industry and manufactures, they were not even thought of. You have already conject-

ured that in a region so backward the Bible was scarcely known; for the Bible does not suffer those who receive it to remain in such a condition. It appears to concern itself only about religious subjects, while in truth comprehending every thing: instruction, schools, industry, commerce, agriculture, civilization, general welfare; and therefore, children, the first thing that is done when men wish to keep the people in ignorance is to prevent them from reading the Bible, just like those wicked men who begin by putting out the light when they wish to commit some evil deed.

This little community, which ignorance, rudeness, poverty, and unbelief seemed to have chosen as their place of refuge, well-nigh as if it had been an island of the South Seas or a tribe of Hottentots, was entered one day, in the year 1767, by Oberlin, a young pastor twenty-seven years of age, who accepted this humble

post because other men had no desire to fill it. A pious and charitable heart intent on doing good, a candid and cultivated mind prompt to discern the means to be adopted, a persistent will to carry those measures into execution, — these are the three qualities which are most necessary in order to make a man useful. Oberlin possessed them all in a rare degree. Immediately he sets himself to work, and aims to accomplish two things: to renew the hearts of the people by the gospel, and the country by civilization, following the example of Jesus Christ, who scatters all around him blessings both spiritual and temporal. On the Sabbath he preaches the gospel, and while proclaiming the love of our heavenly Father, who "so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life," [1] he melts the hardest

[1] John 3: 16.

hearts, and he makes his parishioners his own friends in making them the friends of Jesus Christ. He was even accustomed to call them *his children*, and they called him *their father;* most of them in speaking to him said *papa.* Then during the week he sets out at their head, a pick-axe on his shoulder, digs ditches to receive the waters, raises walls to support the lands, opens local roads from one village to another, and constructs a road and a bridge in order to establish communication with Strasburg. Nor is this all. He sends to Germany for potatoes, to restore this culture, and introduces better flax-seed from Riga in Russia, with the design of acclimatizing it in the *Ban-de-la-Roche;* he establishes a savings bank; encourages industry; sends, at his own expense, intelligent young boys to Strasburg to learn trades and to become masons, joiners, glaziers, blacksmiths, and wheelwrights; introduces cotton-spinning, and through

his growing reputation induces the Le Grand family of Basle to settle in the country, and they establish a great manufactory of silk ribbons, an industry which becomes a real blessing to the community both in worldly and religious results, and the more extensively a blessing because it places the ribbon business in the homes of the people and does not remove the workmen from the family life. And after sixty years of such a ministry, Oberlin falls asleep at the age of eighty-six, surrounded by his great family in tears; leaving a Christian people where he had found an unbelieving people, and a prosperous country instead of an uncultivated and uncivilized region.

Do not think that all this was done without opposition. You know what his Master and ours has said: "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me."[1] Oberlin, like all others, experienced

[1] Luke 9: 23.

this; but he sought to overcome evil with good,[1] and had success in the end. One day he was privately informed that a few peasants, dissatisfied with his gospel and his counsels, had determined to surprise him in an out-of-the-way place and abuse him, in order to put an end to his reforms. A Sunday had been fixed upon for the execution of the plot. That day Oberlin took for the text of his morning sermon those words of our Lord: "Resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also."[2] After the service, those who were in the plot were assembled in the house of one of their number to make ready their attack, when suddenly the door opened and Oberlin entered quite alone. "My friends," he said to them, "here am I. Your purpose is known to me. You wished to punish me, doubtless,

[1] Rom. 12: 21.
[2] Matt. 5: 39.

because you thought me guilty. Well then, if I have refused to submit to the truth which I preach to you, punish me. I prefer to give myself up to you, in order to save you from the baseness of making a secret attack upon me." What do you think those wicked men did? They begged his pardon, and from that day onward, to make him forget their crime, they did all they could to aid him in his benevolent plans.

See in this man, my children, one who did his work, the work which God prepared for him, and him for it. For who can think that Oberlin might have had elsewhere something better to do than that which he did at *Ban-de-la-Roche?* or that another than Oberlin could have done better than he the work which he there accomplished? Go and ask *his children* who still, with a tender pride, show to strangers the tomb of the good Oberlin, if he could not say in death, "I have

finished the work which thou gavest me to do."

It is not for me to do thus, one of you perhaps is saying; I have not the knowledge that Oberlin possessed, nor his talents nor his position. My child, the question is not, Will you do Oberlin's, but will you do *your* work in the spirit in which Oberlin performed *his?* God has works adapted to all minds and all positions. You have just seen the work of a good pastor; look now at the work of a poor servant woman who labored by his side.

There was in Bellefosse, one of the five villages of *Ban-de-la-Roche*, a young peasant girl, scarcely fifteen years of age. Louisa Scheppler was so touched by Oberlin's work that she asked permission to have her little part in it by entering into service in his family. From that time she did not leave him, and served him until his death, for the space of fifty years, never accepting any wages, wishing

to be like a friend in the house without ceasing to be an obedient servant. She was so useful an assistant that it is impossible to relate the history of Oberlin's life without combining with it that of Louisa Scheppler. Not only did she execute his benevolent errands in every part of his parish, carrying in every direction advice, assistance, food, and remedies, but sometimes she even gave him happy ideas which had not occurred to the good pastor. Thus, seeing that the peasants could not attend to their labor on the land and at the same time take care of their little children, she bethought herself of collecting the children in large rooms where pious women, with Louisa at their head, would watch over them, amuse and teach them whilst their parents were working in the fields. Such was the origin of our *halls of refuge*,[1] as they are now called, for the idea of which we are indebted to

[1] *Salles d'asile.*

Oberlin, and to him it was suggested, as we have seen, by Louisa Scheppler, his servant. Nothing can more plainly show you what she was to her master than these lines in Oberlin's will: "My dear, dear children, I bequeath to you my faithful nurse who brought you up, the indefatigable Louisa. She has been to you a faithful nurse, a faithful mother and teacher — every thing, in short. Her zeal extended further: a true apostle of our Lord, she went into all the villages to which I sent her, gathering the children around her, instructing them in the will of God, teaching them to sing beautiful hymns, showing them in nature the works of Almighty God, our heavenly Father, praying with them, and imparting all the instruction of various kinds which she had received from me and from your excellent mother. The numberless difficulties which she encountered in these holy occupations would have discouraged

multitudes; the wild character of the children, their provincial dialect, the bad roads, the inclement seasons, rocks, pools of water, excessive rains, icy winds, hail, deep snow, — none of these could keep her back. She sacrificed her time and her person to the service of God. I bequeath her to you; by the care which you shall take of her, you will show whether you respect the last will of your father." Oberlin's children wished to give Louisa a child's portion in the little fortune left by her master. She absolutely refused it; she asked only for permission to add the name of Oberlin to her own, and she afterwards called herself Louisa Scheppler Oberlin. And, my children, is it not true that Louisa Scheppler Oberlin did her work in every way as well as Oberlin did his work? Could she not, like him, like the Lord, have said when dying, "I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do"?

And you, my dear child, what is your work? For God has one fully prepared for you; rest assured of that. Has he set before you a great work, like that of Oberlin, or a work yet greater than that of Oberlin, as was that of Wilberforce, who gave no rest to the Parliament of England during eighteen years, until at last it set at liberty the slaves that belonged to England; or one greater than the work of Wilberforce, as was that of Luther, who brought out the gospel from under a bushel three centuries ago, and who emancipated one half of the Christian world from the yoke of man and from the traditions of man which had been substituted for the authority of God and of the word of God? To you that seems impossible; but God alone knows what he designs to make of each one of you; and if Oberlin or Wilberforce or Luther had been told at your age that which God intended to accomplish

through them, they would have judged it equally impossible. Or has God placed before you a modest work, like that of Louisa Scheppler, or still more humble, perhaps, as was that of the Shepherd of Salisbury Plain, or of the paralytic of Planchamp (whose lives you have read in the tracts which bear their names; if not, read them), or of some other, respecting whom nothing has been written, and whose life has been all hidden in God, without having been on that account any the less a blessing upon the earth? I know not, my good friends, nor can you or any man know *what* the work is which God has reserved for you; but that is not the thing which it is important for you to know. The great thing to be known is, whether *you will do* your work, whatever it may be. Oh, of what great moment that is, my children! For tell me in a word which was the more desirable for Oberlin, to regenerate the *Ban-de-la-*

Roche, or to fill the world with the glory of his name? And for Louisa Scheppler, to second Oberlin in his ministry of charity, or to live only for herself? And which is the more desirable life for that little boy or that little girl, to "enjoy the pleasures of sin for a little season," and then to die, or faithfully to accomplish the task appointed by God, and then to fall asleep in the bosom of the Lord? I willingly leave the answer with your own hearts, my friends. What a misfortune, had these men whom I have just named thought otherwise than they did! if Oberlin, Wilberforce, Luther, Louisa Scheppler, had forsaken their beautiful work to run after the riches, the honors, and the pleasures of the world, as they might have done and as so many others have done! What a misfortune, I do not say for the earth, for had they failed, God could have easily found other servants to fill their places; but what a misfortune for *them*

to deprive themselves of that holy and blessed service in which God was well pleased to honor them by employing them! And you, dear children, what a misfortune would it be for you, what a misfortune in time, and what a still greater misfortune in eternity, were you to go, like so many other children, alas! like the greater number of children, and neglect the work, whatever it may be, which God has chosen for you, in order to follow your own wills and the inclinations of your own wicked hearts. Oh! I can not consent to this, nor can you any more than I. Well then, do you wish to know whether you will perform your work? You can know this; for God has so ordered things that the question of curiosity, *What* shall be my work? can not be answered, and the question of fidelity, Shall I do my work? is easy to be solved. To know whether you will do your work, or, as says my text, "whether

your work shall be pure, and whether it shall be right," you have no need to inquire of me or of others; you have only to see what are "your doings" to-day. The seed becomes an oak, if it bears in itself to-day the germ of an oak; and you will accomplish your work of to-morrow, of the day after, of all your life, if you do to-day the work of to-day: like seed, like tree; like child, like man. Yes, my children, provided you do what you ought to do; or, if not having done it hitherto, you begin doing it to-day, you can be at ease with regard to your whole life. Do you feel how beautiful, consoling, and admirable that is? When one sees a child, one thinks always of the future; it is of the present that we ought to think; and in thinking of the present we are thinking of every thing. The friends of Zacharias, on seeing the child John, said, "What manner of child shall this be?" but Zacharias, his father, was at

rest in his mind, because he had heard the angel who announced his birth say, "He shall be filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb." This was enough to make it certain that this child, when he became a man, "should go before the Lord, in the spirit and power of Elias, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord."[1] Your actions of to-day, my children, your actions of this day — at them you must look. Are they what they ought to be? All is well for to-morrow. Are they not so? All is wrong. I know well that you may change at some future time, but I am sure only of those who to-day are that which they ought to be, and are doing that which they ought to do; they alone, also, are sure of themselves, with the grace of God, which will not fail them if they humbly wait for it. With respect to others, they can change, say they, at a later day. But when? but

[1] Luke 1: 17.

will they be alive later? will they be able later? will they be willing later? Alas! that which keeps them back to-day, why will it not hinder them later also? To-day, my friends, to-day, or perhaps never! But the work of to-day, your work as a child, what is it? That is the point in all this matter most needing to be thoroughly understood.

A young oak, very young though it is, is an oak; a child also is a man, and a child's work is no other than the man's work taken up in childhood. To love God with all the heart and his neighbor as himself, that is the calling of the man; such, then, is the child's also. "Thou shalt love God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, and with all thy mind." Do you believe that the child is free from this holy and sweet obligation? Ah! I am very sure that you could not desire such wretched freedom, which would be an insult to all the children in the world.

And whom will you love, my children, if you love not God who has given you all that you have, who has made you all that you are; God the alone wise, the alone good, to whom David sings that beautiful One Hundred and Third Psalm: "Bless the Lord, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless his holy name! Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits!" Not love him who "is love;" can not one be a child, then, without having a mind that is false, a heart that is hard, and a soul filled with ingratitude? Shall it be said that a child needs to *see* things, and that he can not love God because he does not see God? I hope you would readily answer that by saying that if you do not see him with the eyes of the body, you do see him with those of the heart: you see him in all the blessings with which he loads you, in that pure air which you breathe, in that limpid water which quenches thirst, in that

wheat springing from the earth, which nourishes you, in that sun which enlightens and warms you, in that mother who presses you to her bosom. You see him every-where, in every thing except in that which is evil — that alone does not come from him. Do not listen to the language of impious and mocking men, my children; but listen to God, who says to you, "My child, give me thy heart;" and give it to him, all of it, and without delay: this is the first and the great commandment. And this is the second, which is like unto it: "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." It is never too soon — believe it fully — to put this second commandment in practice. At all times, in every age of life, abundant occasions can be found, if they are sought, for being agreeable and useful to one's neighbor. A child, as well as a grown person, can find such opportunities; one may even say that in some respects they are more

readily found by a child than by another, because all hearts are open to a child, and the good which he does is more touching than if done by another person, particularly if, in order to accomplish it, he is obliged to take trouble on himself or to undergo some privation. See that little boy who is making the rounds of a drawing-room full of people, having in his hand his box for the poor or for missions, shaking it from time to time to arouse those whose heads are turned away. Every one gives him something; the smaller he is, the better he succeeds; they would refuse me sooner than him, nor would I dare do what he is doing. You say, How can I do good? In a thousand ways. You can make your parents happy, and that is doing good; you can oblige your brothers and sisters, and that also is doing good; you can set a good example to your companions, and that again is doing good. If you see your friends

doing something wrong, you can turn them from it; you can speak to them of the goodness of God, and counsel them also to give him their hearts. All this, my dear children, can not be done without encountering difficulties, without making sacrifices. Sometimes your good intentions will be misunderstood by others, and they will return you evil for good; sometimes they will mock you and call you a little saint; sometimes, perhaps, you will be rudely repulsed and abused. And what then? You will say to yourselves that we are upon the earth to do the will of God and not our own. It is in order to accustom you early to the renouncing of your own wills that God has placed your parents near you and has said to you, "Children, obey your fathers and your mothers." That obedience, that precious obedience, prepares you, more than all besides, for your work to come. A child who is obedient to his father and

his mother will be so, at a later day, to all his superiors: to his teachers, to his pastors, to magistrates, to constituted authorities. Especially at this time when men make sport of overthrowing all kinds of government where it can be done without the fear of punishment, happy is the child who shall give a better example, and who, in the midst of the general disobedience, shall find his glory in obeying and in being subject; a general holding his ground with a small band against a great army affords less proof of courage than such a child.

Let us imagine a child animated by this spirit, and let us follow him during an entire day from morning until evening. We will select a child who, like the most of you, goes to school (those who do not go have their school at home, for surely their parents do not suffer them to do nothing), and we will suppose that he is eight years of age, and that his name is Julius. Little

Julius rises early, and having promptly and neatly finished his toilet, opens his little Bible, reads a chapter in it, or a few verses, and then kneels down and prays. The reading and the prayer do not last very long; a half-hour, or perhaps still less, suffices for the whole; we do not expect of a child that which is expected from a man; but his heart is in it, and God looks at the heart. Do not think that this dear child does but recite prayers learned by heart; no, he speaks to God; he speaks of what he has to do during the day and of the assistance of which he has need; of faults committed yesterday, and which he wishes to avoid to-day; of a temptation which he foresees and which he is anxious to overcome; of his sick father or mother, whom God alone can heal; of a brother or a school-fellow, for whom he asks all which he asks for himself.

This reminds me of a charming anecdote of a little boy who was obliged to

recite every day prayers committed to memory, but who, as soon as he had begun to love the Lord, had felt the need of adding to them prayers drawn from his own heart. "Mamma," said he one day to his mother, "there, I have said my prayers; now I am going to pray."

After a few moments spent with his parents and a short service of family worship in which all are united, as I love to think, Julius has now set out for school. In going to it, he does not take the roundabout road which is preferred by the lazy; he goes directly, promptly, and even gayly, having found out, young as he is, that there is more happiness in laboring than in shirking. Arrived at school, he puts in practice that advice of an old author, "*Do* what thou doest." Wholly given to his work, whether he reads, writes, or does examples in arithmetic, he accomplishes each one of his tasks with all the carefulness of which he is

capable, because he accomplishes it as "serving the Lord and not man." If he acts as monitor, he is all eyes and all ears to direct, encourage, and reprove, if need be, his school-mates who are placed under his supervision. Exact in discharging his duty, especially submissive to his teachers, he thus fulfills, in his small measure, the beautiful precept of Saint Peter, "As every one hath received a gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God."[1] You think, perhaps, seeing him so studious and so quiet, that he is a feeble, sluggish child, with no blood in his veins. Follow him out of class, and you would be quickly undeceived: "To every thing its season." When the hour of recreation has come, there is no pupil who puts more energy into his play than Julius. At prison-bars he runs the fastest; at ball, no one is more adroit; at hop-scotch, he

[1] 1 Peter 4: 10.

keeps himself on one foot longer than any one else; every boy courts the pleasure of playing with him, he enters into each game so heartily. At work, the best student; at play, the best comrade. Add to this that at home he is the best son.

School ended, the family has its turn. Julius returns home with a good conscience, which is the first requisite for being happy yourselves and for making those about you happy. Pleasure like that which he shows at seeing again his father and mother, his brothers and sisters, is felt by each of them in seeing him again at home. He inquires about all that has taken place in the house, he relates what he has been doing during the day, what he has learnt at school, and what he has seen on the road. And at last, after a day well filled out, he goes to sleep in peace, having commended his soul to God. Thus all his days pass away, Sundays excepted. On Sunday he

is differently occupied; work and play are all suspended; it is "the day of the Lord." Our little Julius sanctifies it, not unwillingly, but with a hearty zest. On that day, he doubles the time which he ordinarily gives to prayer and to the reading of the Bible, to which he adds some other good book from those that are published in our day for children, or perhaps some good paper for children, such as The Little Messenger of Missions or The Friend of Youth.[1] At the Sunday-school he is one of the most punctual. When the list of absent or tardy pupils is read at the end of the service, you never find his name there, unless he is sick; and no one knows his verses better, or can give a better account of the preceding lesson. And as in a well-regulated life there is time for every thing, there remains to him

[1] Corresponding to The American Messenger and Child's Paper of the American Tract Society; and to the various papers for children carefully prepared by different Christian denominations in the United States. — Tr.

much time for his family, in the midst of which he seeks his sweetest pastime, never wearying of talking with his friends, in winter by the fireside, in summer on a retired walk. He gives good counsel to the younger members of the family; he opens his heart to his mother; he questions his father; he gains information from them; it may be that he has some good things — and some of them very good — to bring to their knowledge; and if you could listen to his parents at night you might hear them saying to each other, God has given us a treasure in that child!

But Julius, do you say, is a model child, a nonesuch? There will be at least one such in the world, my child, if you desire it; and that one will be you. What is there impossible in that? Is it impossible to rise early? Is it impossible to read the Bible and to pray? Impossible to be devoted to study and docile to instructors? Impossible to be obedient

to parents and obliging to brothers and sisters? Impossible to learn thoroughly one's verses for the Sunday-school? It is true that no one will attain to all this by a single effort; but if there is a failure at some point, is it impossible to rise again after having fallen, and to reach the end aimed at, little by little, though there be more than one fall by the way; as a child, after many missteps, ends by learning to walk? I hear you saying, All that *could* be done, but all that is *not* done. I say in my turn all that is not done in the case of an ordinary child, but all that is done in the case of a child who is a Christian. That is my position, my friends. A Christian child; that is what you must be to give me confidence, by your work to-day, with regard to your work in time to come. A watch will not run if the spring is not wound up; a water-wheel will not turn if the water does not fall upon it; the mill does not

move if the wind does not blow upon its sails; and you can not do your work if you have not Jesus Christ in your hearts: "Examine yourselves, to see whether Christ be in you." Many persons, perhaps, are astonished to hear me speak of *Christian children.* They imagine that in order to be a Christian it is necessary to be a grown-up man or woman. This is a great mistake. Jesus Christ came into the world for the small as well as the great, and were a choice to be made, it is not the great who would be found the most ready to receive him; it would be the little ones, for the same reason that a small tree is more easily bent than a large one. You remember well that Jesus Christ showed a singular love towards children. One might say that he came expressly for them. What is a Christian, my dear children? It is a man who believes in Jesus Christ with that faith which comes from the heart and not from

the head, and which leads a man to take hold of the gospel in earnest and put it in practice. And what is there to prevent a child, what is there to prevent you, my little friend, from believing in Jesus Christ? Jesus Christ came to seek and to save poor sinners, lost by their evil deeds; are not you a sinner, my child? God forbids lying; have you never lied? God commands: Honor thy father and thy mother; have you never disobeyed your parents? God's will is that the young be in subjection to the old; have you failed in the respect due to your teachers? God's will is that we be sober; have you never been gluttonous? God's will is that we labor six days, and that we rest on the seventh day; have you never been idle at school, or thoughtless on the Sabbath? God's will is that we love God with all our hearts and our neighbor as ourselves; have you never been selfish, hard, unjust, violent towards

your neighbor? And with respect to God; have you truly loved him with all your heart? Have you passed an entire day without praying, without giving him thanks, and without thinking of him? Alas! my poor child, you have not waited till you were even six or seven years old to become guilty in all these things and in many others. Look at your little brother, scarcely two years of age, or perhaps but one year old: how self-willed he is! how passionate he becomes! how he strikes his nurse or his mother! how easy it is to see that he knows when he is doing right and when he is doing wrong! Sin begins with life, my dear children, and if one desires to know whether little children have a part in it, like others, there is an easy method of ascertaining the truth. It is written: "Sin hath entered into the world, and death by sin;" it is only necessary to see whether little children die like the rest of

mankind. But however it may be with little children, you, my child, who have sinned knowingly and willfully, where will you find your pardon save beneath the cross of Jesus Christ? Is he not the "Lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the world"?[1] Is he not the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world?[2] "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin," and there is no other thing in all the world that can cleanse you from the least sin; nothing, neither alms, nor works, nor penances, nor maceration of the body, nor prayers even. Where the blood of Jesus Christ has been applied, sin is blotted out; where it has not been applied, sin remains forever and ever, and with it, my children, the wrath of God. To be a child will not avail; it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the

[1] John 1: 29.
[2] 1 John 2: 2.

living God. Oh, my young friends, "flee from the wrath to come"! Children who hear me, does any one of you wish to be saved? "To-day, if you hear his voice, harden not your heart."[1] Go to your home, fall on your knees and say to him, My Saviour, I know that thou didst come for me, too. Wash me in thy precious blood, and give me grace to live for thee and to die in thee. That prayer, be assured, will not be rejected. Jesus Christ passed through all ages of human life in order to save all. He is the Saviour of the man, he is also the Saviour of the child; he is your Saviour, who laid down his life for you, who has asked that the Holy Spirit may be given you, who will give you strength to conquer sin, who will comfort you in your troubles, who will be to you both God and brother. Know and feel your happiness in having been born in France and not in one of

[1] Ps. 95: 7, 8.

those countries where the name of Christ has not come; or in those savage islands where children are brought up in wickedness and vice; in China, where daughters are sold by their fathers, or treated like slaves; or in Otaheite, where mothers used to kill their children as soon as they were born. Realize this happiness of yours, and show your sense of it by giving your heart to that God who has loved you so much. If there are but few Christian children, the stronger reason is there for you to set a good example; let there be at least one faithful Christian child, and be you that one. Thus, my child, you will make it known by "your doings" to-day that "your work" to come "will be pure and will be right."

But if this work to come should never come? If you were to die before having commenced it? My dear child, if you are to die before having begun your work, that will prove that what we call your

work is not your work; for God, who knows perfectly when you are to die, has surely not assigned you a work on the earth for the time when you shall no longer be here. You ought to prepare yourself for a long life, because that may be granted you; but if it is not, your preparation will not be lost on that account — take heed that you do not think so. If you are to die young, that preparation itself will then be your work; it will be the good which you are doing to-day; it will be the good example which you are giving to-day; it will be the joy which you are causing your parents to-day; it will be the useful words which you are speaking to-day; childhood, with its Bible and its prayers, with its school and its joys, with its obedience and its obscurity, will be your work; and it will be your work to live as a Christian child knows how to live, and to die as a Christian child knows how to die. This is a

wonderful thing in Jesus Christ, that he provides for every thing at one and the same time, and that he serves alike for living and for dying; for a long life and for a short life; for the activity of health and for the quiet of sickness; for prosperity and for poverty; for days of joy and for days of trial; for the great and the small; for the strong and the weak; for every thing and for all men.

Shall I tell you of a child who died very young, and yet whose work was finished? The child of whom I am thinking was a little girl (the girls, also, must have their story). A minister of the gospel once assembled the children of his parish and told them of heathen people: how some of them worship images of wood and of stone; others of them, animals; others, the rivers; and others, the sun; and how there are among them wretched parents who kill their own children, and especially their little daugh-

ters, in order to avoid the expense and trouble of bringing them up. During this narrative, he observed a pale, delicate little girl, whose shining eyes were fixed upon him, and who lost not a word of what he was saying. Having finished speaking, the pastor showed the children some little boxes covered with pretty pictures, representing missionary scenes among the Indians, and offered to give one to every child who throughout the year which was commencing would lay aside something every week to aid in evangelizing the heathen. Just at this moment he saw the little girl pass her arm around the neck of her father, a poor blacksmith, who was sitting at her side, as if to persuade him to ask for one for her. "My friend," said the pastor to him, "do you wish a box for your little daughter?" The father took it, saying, "But I do not know whether the poor child will ever be able to get any thing for you."

A year passed away; the missionary meeting, in which the boxes were to be returned and opened, was held. The poor blacksmith did not fail to be present, but this time he was alone. In the course of the year he had lost his wife, and only two days before he had buried his dear little daughter. Weeping, he gave back the box to the pastor, and said to him, "Here is the box which you gave *her*. . . . My dear little girl asked me to give her one sou out of my wages every week in which I was pleased with her conduct; the sou has never been wanting. Fifty-two weeks have passed; there ought to be fifty-two sous in the box; the pastor will please count them." The minister counted and found fifty-five, three more than the number expected. The father, much disturbed, counted and counted over again; at last he lifted his hand to his head, exclaiming, "I do not understand it at all. My blessed child would

not have taken what did not belong to her, even for a good work. However, the three sous are there; I did not give them to her; where did they come from?" He was so agitated by this that the next morning, when a pious lady who had loved his child very much, was visiting him, he confided his anxiety to her. "I believe," said the lady, "that I can relieve your mind. While visiting your daughter, the evening before her death, seeing her distressed by the fever, I asked her if the juice of an orange would not be pleasant to her; she answered, yes. I was just returning from making some purchases in the city, and having no other change than three sous which I had received at a shop, I gave them to your daughter to buy an orange for herself. I remember very well seeing the mission-box then on the child's bed, and regretting that I had nothing to put in it." "Thank God," said the father, "and

may he be pleased to pardon my suspicions. I am certain the orange was not purchased; my child refused that refreshment for her dying lips that she might put three sous more into her box."

My dear children, that little girl did not talk, but she acted, and that is worth far more. Did she not live a Christian life and die a Christian death? Was she not a model of piety, of charity, and of self-denial? And then, very young as she was at death, did she not do her work before dying; towards those poor Indians whom she helped to evangelize; towards the Lord whom she sought to make known to them; towards her father whom she rendered so happy; towards that pastor, that lady, that assembly, whom she edified so remarkably; towards you whom she is even now edifying? Oh, how truly have the "doings" of that little girl made it known that her "work would be pure and that it would be right"! "Go ye and do likewise."

Dear, dear children, who hear me, take courage! It costs something to be a Christian. You have, perhaps, companions who will ridicule you. I am not willing to imagine that you have parents who oppose you; but this is sometimes true. You will have to renounce more than one pleasure vaunted by the world. You may be called to great sacrifices for the sake of Jesus Christ: "Whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple."[1] But the safety of your soul in eternity is worth all sacrifices; and even in this life the happiness of serving so good a master should suffice to console you. And then, if there are sacrifices in the Christian life, there are also great blessings even of a temporal nature. These are not what we ought to seek for, in seeking Jesus Christ; but he gives them to us without our seeking them, and the more surely the less we have sought them. I told you

[1] Luke 14: 27.

when I began, that I could know nothing concerning your earthly future. There is, however, something that I do know about it; I know what Jesus Christ promised when he said: "Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you." If God designs to prolong your days upon the earth, I know, my child, — apart from exceptional circumstances which he only can foresee, — that if you are attentive, studious, and diligent (and you will be so if you are a Christian child), you will become intelligent and skillful: a dextrous artisan; an accomplished merchant: you will be one whose work shall prosper, according to that which is written in the book of Proverbs: "The soul of the diligent shall be made fat;"[1] and I know, on the contrary, that if you are idle, heedless, thoughtless, you will be able to do nothing as you ought, and during your whole life

[1] Prov. 13: 4.

will vegetate in your profession, whatever it may be, according to that which is also written in the same passage: "The soul of the sluggard desireth only and hath nothing." I know that if you are religious, charitable, punctual in your engagements, prompt to render service (and all that you will be, if you are a Christian child), you will draw upon you the grace of God and the favor of men, and you will succeed in your undertakings, according to that which is written: "The generation of the upright shall be blessed: wealth and riches shall be in his house." [1]

And I know, also, that if you run after pleasure, if you profane the Sabbath, if you are idle on week-days, if you deceive your neighbor, if you think only of yourself, the blessing of God will not rest upon you, and you will fall into difficulties, into want, and into indigence, according to that which is also written:

[1] Ps. 112: 2, 3.

"Him that honoureth me, I will honour, and he that despiseth me shall be lightly esteemed."[1] I know that if your language is chaste, your morals pure, your life sober, your hours well filled, your amusements simple and honest (and this they will be if you are a Christian child), you will enjoy vigorous health, which is the first of all earthly blessings; and I know, also, that if you are a trifler, or a drunkard, a debaucher, or given to any excess, you will grow old before your time, you will lose body and soul, you will pluck down ruin upon your household with your own hands, you will heap up suffering and shame, you will become a burden to society, a burden to the Church, a burden to your family, and you will be preparing to become a burden to the hospital or asylum where you will end your career, saying to yourself, that your cup of bitterness may be full: "Thou didst will it to be so."

[1] 1 Sam. 2: 30.

Yes, my friends, in some sort you hold in your hands even your temporal destiny: and in accordance with that which you are to-day, you can foresee with certainty whether you will have repose, success, health, ease, and honor in the world. In any event, and this is the essential point, we can foresee "whether your work shall be pure and whether it shall be right." Oh! profit, profit by the great privilege which your age confers on you. Placed at the entrance of your career, it is still in your power to take the right course for your entire future lives: what a privilege, my children, what a privilege is this!

If you do not know it to be so, there are those here who, as I am persuaded, know it well. Ah! my children, how quickly should I convince you what happiness is yours, if I could lay open before you the heart of such a man, or of such a woman, who is now listening to me

with you. Having passed through the greater part of that career on which you have just entered, such an one now takes a painful survey of himself, while thinking of you and of the good fortune which is yours in having the warnings which you hear, whilst there is yet time to heed them. You have often desired to be older than you are; some of you would fain be ten and some would be twenty, and some thirty, years older than you now are, in order to be men. And some who *are* men and women would wish (a desire much more rational than yours) to cut off from their lives, some of them ten and some twenty, and some thirty years, and some still more than that, in order to become children again like you. Happy little boy! says that wretched father, who by his irregular life, or by his scandalous conduct, has plunged his wife into despair, his children into want, and himself into want and despair with them; if I were to

day in his place, I would have only to do what Mr. Monod advises me, in order to avoid all the misfortunes that have befallen me. I should be to-day a good father, esteemed in society, happy in my family, at peace with my wife, an example to my children; I should have children, orderly, obedient, grateful, who would love me. Happy child! why am I not in his place? Happy little girl! says that woman, worn out with the world, loving the world and loved by the world (if that exchange of selfish sentiments can be called love!), but neither giving nor receiving happiness; with her mind empty, her heart empty, or filled only with regret and remorse. If I were in her place, I would not have done what I have done. I would not have sought my rest in the world, which wearies me and exhausts me and weighs me down; but from which I have no longer the strength to separate myself. I would not have accepted the hand of a

man without piety and without fixed principles; we would not be traveling separate ways! my daughters would not be going to one church and my sons to another — if they go to any: and I would not be feeling myself isolated in the midst of the world, alone in the bosom of my family. Happy little girl! why am I not in her place? Happy child! says a third, who has wasted his time and his fine abilities, and who is dragging on a miserable existence without profit to any one; were I in his place, I should not be what I am. I should not be ignorant, useless to others, useless to myself, incapable of any continuous study. How many useful things I might have done! How many good works I might have accomplished! How many services I might have rendered to others! How many sufferings I might have relieved! Happy child! why am not I in his place?

And this, my friends, is but a small part

of what I hear. I could not, I would not, I dare not tell you all. So many faults, so many sorrows, so many sins, so many vices, so many sicknesses, so many crimes, perhaps, are there that my adult hearers could have spared themselves, and from which *you* can escape by listening to this gospel and putting it in practice! Were you even listening to it for the first time and for the last, this single opportunity might alone suffice. Preserve in your memory and in your hearts this day which has here convened us. Act in such a manner that during the whole course of your childhood you can remember this day with joy, as a day on which you made a covenant with the God of Jesus Christ for life and for death! So act that during the entire course of your career on earth, you may be able to remember this day with joy, as a day in which you plighted yourselves to walk in the right way, with a step firm, resolute, per-

severing, and to pursue that way during all of life, never turning aside from it. So act that in the day when you shall appear before the judgment seat, you may remember this day with joy, as a day on which you fled from the wrath to come and on which you took the first step in that Christian faith and that Christian life whose precious fruits you shall gather throughout all eternity.

But you, my adult hearers, who regret the past, and who contemplate these dear children with an interest that is mingled with tender sympathy and a painful longing, the past is past, but the Saviour is present, salvation is present, consolation is present, reparation is present: *it is not too late.* It was my duty to tell these dear children that which I read in your hearts, in order to spare them the bitterness of being obliged to say the same things to themselves some day; but far from me be the thought of sacrificing my older au-

dience to my young hearers! I must say to you, whoever you are, that I do not despair of you, of any one among you. No, it is not too late to do your work; it is not too late to do your work as well as you could have done it, or even better than you could have done it, at any other time. Faith accomplishes more than to protect the present; it guarantees the future; it does more than guarantee the future: it retrieves the past; and here is its triumph, and here the sublime foolishness of the gospel, and its impossibility rendered possible. Yes: faith even retrieves the past; for faith seizes upon God; and God, in whom are united all times, the past, the present, and the future;[1] God in whom (we may add) there is neither present, nor past, nor future, gathers together in one all times, to save them all in himself; and, in that ever-present eternity of his grace,[2] in

[1] Heb. 13: 8.
[2] 2 Peter 3: 8.

which he anticipates the future, because "He it is who calleth the things that are not as though they were." He makes the past also to live again, because he it is "who quickeneth the dead." Such as you are, with what of strength remains to you, with that which is measured out to you of life, only believe, and you shall discover for yourselves, in the very midst of your doubts, of your errors, and your unbeliefs, — irreparable according to man, but according to God more than reparable, susceptible of being turned into good, — hidden resources for doing the work which God is now giving you to do. Your work is the avowal of your humiliating experience, which will be profitable to others, and which to-day is profitable to these very children; and your work is all that good which is still held in reserve for you to accomplish, if you ask of God open eyes and faithful hearts; a good so much the more real, so much the more profound, so

much the more spiritual, as you have been prepared to do it by minds more contrite, by hearts more broken. Go forward, then, in faith, in hope, in love, and there is nothing which shall prevent your yet taking your place beside Mary Magdalen, beside Zacchæus, beside the thief who repented on the cross.

To you, fathers and mothers, I speak these words; to you more than all others — to you in a twofold sense; to you, for yourselves, and to you, for those others, who are yourselves according to the flesh, and who will be, probably, according to the spirit. *They will be that which you shall make them*, after God. I have but one hour in which to speak to them. You have a whole life-time. I appeal to your consciences, in the presence of God, and of the gospel; in your intercourse with them, second the work that I have done this day; second it, and destroy it not!

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